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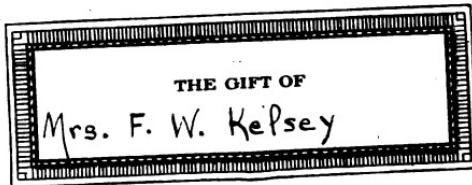
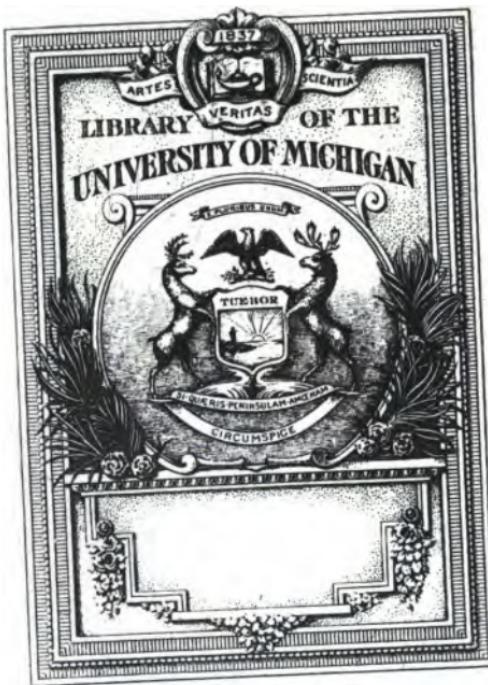
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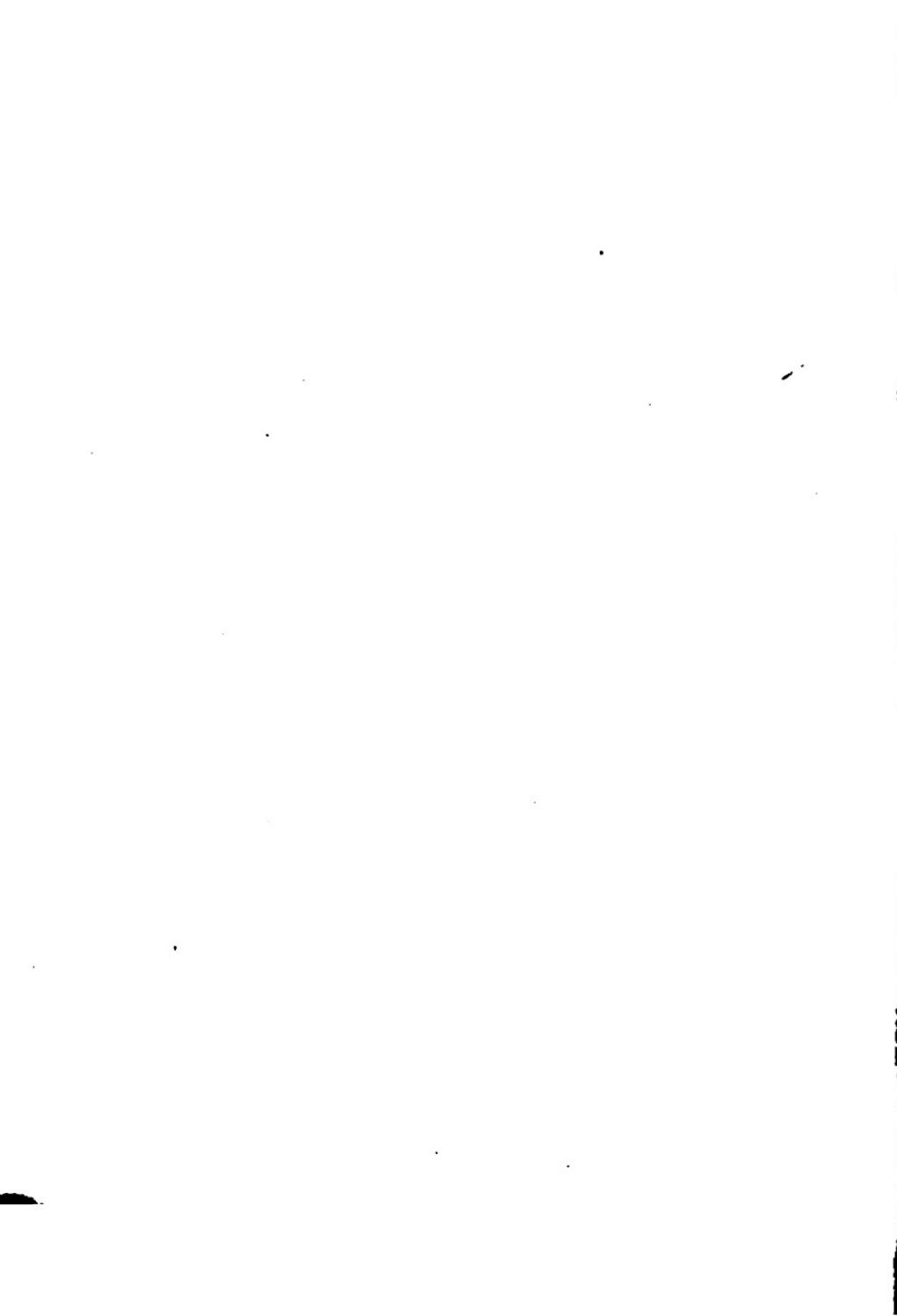
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THE LOVE LEGEND



Shane, Mrs. Peggy (Smith)

THE LOVE LEGEND

BY

WOODWARD BOYD, pseud.

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NEW YORK :: :: :: 1922

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TO
GRACE WOODWARD
AND
DUNCAN M. SMITH



Gift

Mrs. F. W. Kelsey

6-23-29

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BOOK ONE

ANITA



CHAPTER I

WARD HARRIS, at twenty, wore a virginal look like golden rain infiltrated through the stuff of a morning meadow; a look that came from her trust in the love legend, in which she had put all the capital of her youthful hopes, since her mother's whispered story of the prince who was to come and change the world with a magic kiss. Thus Mrs. Harris phrased it—her theory that four men, exhibiting popular superlatives, like models smirking in pink and yellow gowns at a fashion show, were to take form in her household and, after suitable rites and emotional upheavals, unite themselves in marriage with her four daughters, Anita, Ward, Sari and Dizzy.

This tradition was matter for amusement for the three girls, Nita, Sari and Dizzy. Ward alone was credulous about the perfection of her future life. Delicately beautiful, immaculate, exquisite, Ward seemed meant by nature for the heroine of a fairy tale. She had seriously tried to follow her mother's suggestion that she gaze upon the eternal hills and the everlasting seas for the purpose of gaining poise—a quality which she had unconsciously possessed since babyhood. She hoped in this way to win her flawless husband, who would, of course, be attracted solely by her goodness, sweetness and purity.

II

This hot July afternoon Ward came out of the house to stroll down to the lake. Her mother and

Mrs. Partridge, who lived across the street, were sheltered by the porch from the young, blue world of sea and sky. They could taste the cool, fresh odor of Michigan, crystal cold, in a wavering breeze that lazily brushed by. The laughter of happy children swimming and dabbling in the water floated up to them, as Ward, smiling and murmuring phrases of greeting and farewell, crossed their vision and passed out of sight.

The visitor leaned forward in the wicker porch chair and spoke in a low tone, quickened with melodramatic enjoyment.

"Don't let that man Wicker come near Ward." Mrs. Harris looked up from her sewing with a startled eye, casting herself effortlessly into the role of chicken mother protecting her offspring under her wing—a picture she was ever cherishing of herself and seldom being allowed to portray.

Mrs. Partridge related her bit of gossip in a low voice which sounded at a distance like the hum of some fine piece of machinery; machinery which turned out such industriously collected scraps with all the perfection of an art cultivated through some forty or fifty thousand female ancestors. "* * * and I know how dear Ward is always the magnet for any new man that comes to town, and I did feel that I ought to tell you what I know about this man."

Mrs. Harris, who had been enjoying the incident by shaking her head and looking grave over what her daughters would have described as the juiciest parts of the entertainment, thanked Mrs. Partridge soberly and said she would certainly speak to her girls.

III

Lakeshore, a division of Chicago, like all small communities, had its own village cast of characters; a woman's club, led by Mrs. Partridge, a book club with members who yearned, and a country club with a cheerful aroma of immorality sitting rakishly on its towers and terraces 'like a halo askew on the head of a drunken saint.

Of this neighborhood, Mrs. Harris was the grand dame, taken seriously, feared and fawned upon by everyone but her own daughters. Her father had attained some degree of wealth by selling much of his land in the vicinity to the Illinois Steel company, which throbbed and bellowed to the south of them at the mouth of the Calumet river. Mrs. Harris had inherited the house and a moderate income when he died, and had come, a newly widowed with four children, to live in it five years before.

In her early twenties she had left Lakeshore to marry the Reverend Tyndall Harris of Hyde Park, a town which then lay between the village of Lakeshore and Chicago. Born with a talent for visiting the poor, relieving the sick and converting the heathen, a minister's wife was to her the ideal position. And Tyndall Harris was youthful, brilliant and sincere—she could easily classify him as a fairy prince, especially in retrospect.

People called him the greatest churchman in the middle west, the only intellectual in his profession, other hyperboles treasured by her. Those days! Their memory was her secret life of which Ward was the living symbol, for Nita and Ward had been born during this happy period.

But before Sari was born tragedy came. Tyndall Harris repudiated the church, and in his own dramatic, uncompromising way, surrendered his position in the community and went into the department of English Literature at the University of Chicago. Evolution, materialism, socialism. Socialism was the new Christianity that was to remedy the evils of society, and it was a banner under which his passionately crusading nature could march.

Socialism, the whole pot of it, sweetened by his own aesthetic and imaginative gifts, filtered through his lectures in English literature, crept into his essays, and was openly expressed to his ever-growing Sunday evening following.

In the bitter months before Sari was born Mrs. Harris strove to adjust herself to the new order. Her inner life, of intimate contact with a great, holy man, was gone. She spent hours on her knees, imagining that she was trying to forgive her husband, and for a period she thought with a mind unmisted by sentiment. Then she wove a new curtain of illusions which had shut out unpleasant realities ever since.

IV

Dizzy, the youngest, became her father's constant companion. She followed him about like a small dog and took over his philosophy with ardent interest. His thoughts were her thoughts, and five years after his death he was still the strongest influence in her life. She saw life with an intellectual and caustic eye, even at sixteen. She had decided that love was merely the mating instinct, a chemical process.

Sari, too, scoffed unmercifully at the love legend. She was now eighteen and in open rebellion against

her mother. She had graduated from Lakeshore high school that spring and had intentions of going on the stage as a dancer; she was studying with a professional, unknown to her mother, who supposed that Sari's daily lessons and hot, long hours at the studio, portended nothing more than a parlor accomplishment—a horror still fashionable in her mind. Meanwhile Sari—she had been christened Sarah but had adopted the Hungarian name which she pronounced Sharree—took every opportunity for flirting that offered. She scattered kisses in a way to cause the prince to mount his noble steed and leave her in outer darkness. Careless of this approaching disaster, Sari had fixed her mind on a career similar to Pavlowa's and was secretly looking forward to the first of August, when she was to make her professional debut.

Nita, the oldest, who was twenty-two—the sisters were two years apart—had accepted the love legend, outwardly, adding inwardly, the true American philosophy that you have to work for what you get; her husband would come along because she would make him come. Her ambition was popular success in what she called art—magazine covers her goal. She had adopted Christian Science as her religion at the age of sixteen, and was the best friend of her sister Ward, whom she hood-winked, as she did most women—a woman's idol, Nita.

CHAPTER II

I

MRS. PARTRIDGE had just risen to leave when Ward returned from the lake accompanied by a pink and white young man whose yellow locks shone like a Swedish servant girl's.

When Ward had presented him it developed that he was a member of one of those choice organizations which are able to hold the social reins in most American colleges; that Ward had met him the winter before when he had come up from the University of California to attend the fraternity convention in Chicago; that he had finished his engineering course at Berkely that June; that he had been sent to the steel mills with two other young men to begin a career; that the three young men were living in a boarding house together, being fortunate members of the same organization; and that he was to bring the other two over that evening to call. Mrs. Partridge, who frequently gave informal talks to groups of Lakeshore women on the moral baseness of men, paradoxically suggested a beach party that the young men might meet several of the girls of Lakeshore, including her own daughter Helene.

The idea was echoed by Ward and her mother and a moment or so later by Anita, who came up the street from the train flushed with the heat of the day, her curly, black hair loosened a bit under her shade hat. She had been in the studio all day working in oils and felt the atmosphere of paint on her still, as Ward introduced her to Howard Blackton.

Anita's eyes gave the effect of being black under their long lashes. When she was interested, as she was now, they opened wide and seemed to absorb impressions, to flash a vigorous interest in the person with whom she was talking. She gave herself to Blackton, unusually. He seemed interested, also unusually, for Nita was the sort of girl, not beautiful, but well groomed, who fetched a retinue of feminine worshipers, but left most young men cold.

II

She thought about him as she made herself ready for dinner. She had liked the solid way in which he planted his feet on the pavement as he walked away. She liked his smooth, fine-grained skin, his stocky air of solidness, as if he were just on the edge of becoming a responsible business man.

For, of late, sex had been bothering her. She did not yearn for love, but she hated to miss anything. Dandiacial in the trappings of sentiment, her naked self was firm and purposeful. She had spent her twenty-two years in becoming the wholesome American girl, the typical college girl, which she smugly was.

As the typical American girl she adroitly press-agended herself, and was accepted by the girls and women of Lakeshore, her university contemporaries and other enthusiastic feminine acquaintances. They liked her. They understood her. She did the things they admired in a way they admired. Her subtle publicity, curtained by a sophisticated manner, cleverly concealed the bragging she did. When she showed one of her drawings she was able to throw off an impression of carelessness—it was nothing to what she could do, her feminine audience felt. She worked

hard to maintain this surface appearance of ease, which was dear to her heart. In her conversation she scorned popularity, and yet allowed it to be obvious that she was the most liked member of the family.

She was conventional enough to want to ally herself with some church and so turned to a religion which promised success in every line of work. Christian Science, she said, worked wonders for her. Through it she intended to get what she wanted and understood,—success,—the big end of the bargain. Truth, beauty, art, love, justice, were mere disguises with her for the one word, success.

III

In the kitchen Ward was fixing the salad for dinner when Sari, in a bathrobe, hot and barefooted, bounded wrathfully in, demanding to know why her bath water wasn't heated.

An old woman stirred something at the kitchen stove. At first glance this old woman seemed as amazing and intricate as the smart young women who emulate the fashions as depicted in Harper's Bazaar and Vogue. Not only were her sunken cheeks reddened but she was whitewashed over the place where the gums fell away. Lips were painted on her face in the shape of a cupid's bow, but her own lips, shaped on more generous lines, made a feeble protest of individuality underneath. Her deep-set eyes were ringed with black, and her eyebrows, which for some reason she had neglected to pull out, though it was the fashion, hung weedy and unkempt on the projection of her forehead. Endless detail clung to her, little bows, crimped hair, ruffles, ribbons. Her figure, slightly hunched at the shoulders, was hung with odds and ends of clothing.

"No hot water, of course," said Sari, shaking her bobbed head to emphasize the outrage. "After working myself cock-eyed at the studio all day to come home to find that this family has used up every drop—"

Cock-eyed was one of the conversational staples that Sari used quite indiscriminately. It meant everything, anything, or nothing. This time she meant to convey a state of extreme exhaustion due to heat and work.

Ward turned to the ancient at the stove.

"You must have forgotten to light the gas under the tank when I told you to, Olive—"

"Well, yes'm. I didn't see no sense in having it lighted. Besides I'm scared of these here gas lighters —never know when a person is going to get her head knocked off."

Sari stared at the woman Olive in surprise which swiftly merged into merriment. She was new in the household, one of the string of fluctuating housemaids that were always passing through the Harris establishment.

A caricature like Olive was an open sesame to a sea of mirth in which the four girls could loose themselves. Though each carried an inner personality, deadly serious and secret, she could throw it to the winds when touched by the comic, tasting a perfect companionship with her sisters in laughter.

So Sari flung herself down the stairs shrieking into her bare arm, collapsed against the water heater, weak with hilarity. She lit the gas and scrambled up the two flights of stairs to share her discovery with Anita. Ward joined them and they rolled on the bed, as delighted as puppies because they all three found Olive genuinely funny.

IV

Mrs. Harris, at the head of her table, futilely loving, vaguely anxious, was a dulled nonentity, barely existing in the minds of her four daughters. And yet, each was her own reflection. It was as if she had originally possessed all their vital qualities, but had ejected them, one by one, and now only exhibited faded facets that were brilliantly mirrored in her children.

The four girls sat there, discontented and restless, each concerned with her own perturbations, concentrating on her own desires. All were eager to plunge into the race of life and win—win prizes—there were to be no blanks—each being held back for different reasons, chafed and fretted and showed her dislike for her situation in sporadic attempts at domestic reform.

The entrance of Olive signalled suppressed giggles from Ward, Sari and Anita, but as the old creature trailed out of the room, Dizzy turned on them furiously. Her pig-tails cadenced her pungent sarcasm as she nodded, first to Sari, then to Nita, then to Ward.

"That's awfully funny, isn't it? Extremely humorous to see an old woman working in someone's kitchen to keep from starving!"

"It is pathetic," said Anita, "but the way she gets herself up is so killing."

"We'll have to lock up all our cosmetics," said Ward, lilts of laughter in her voice. "She's such a beauty that I'm afraid to have her in the house for fear she'll attract all our beaux."

"Why it is any worse for her to lay snares to attract men than it is for Ward, I cannot see," observed Dizzy in the same accusing tone.

"Elizabeth," protested her mother.

"Well, Ward does try to attract men," said Dizzy, with the frock-coated manner of a public speaker. "A man isn't safe within a mile of her. And why? Why? Because she is so beautiful that they can't resist her? No. Because she won't let them resist her. In vulgar language she's a vamp. And why it's any worse for this old kitchen drudge to be one than it is for Ward, I cannot see."

"Ward is successful occasionally," observed Anita, with a detached, superior air she gave all of the family, except Ward, most of the time.

"Yes!" Dizzy clipped out the monosyllable. They were still laughing. She went on, attempting to marshal an argument as she had heard members of the Socialist party do on the debating platform. "Success! That is all you care about. You'd excuse anything on the ground of success. Caesar Borgia, Napoleon Bonaparte and Captain Kidd were successful, too, but it doesn't follow that they were virtuous, does it? They were all crooks—"

"Diz has such an awful lot of statistics to work out of her system," interrupted Sari, "she's always spilling 'em—"

"Successful!" said Diz, finding her point with the satisfaction of a baby discovering a lost nipple. "What if Ward is successful? That only makes it worse. There is absolutely no justification in it for Ward. It is pure dissipation with her. She indulges herself in breaking men's hearts just for her own amusement. But with this poor old creature it is a case of economic necessity. Why, she realizes that unless she gets some man to support her she can spend her old age in the poorhouse. And so, she is desperately trying the arts and wiles of the modern girl. She made a mistake in

not marrying when she was younger and she realizes it now, so she is doing her best—”

“Dear me, Dizzy, you’re becoming quite sentimental over the old girl,” Anita said.

“Sentimental!” Dizzy exclaimed. It was the one charge she could not endure. She dropped her fork and collapsed suddenly into silence, regarding a spot on the wall across from her for some moments in desperate thought about the stupidity of her family.

The platitude that sixteen is wiser than sixty was exemplified in Dizzy. She was unable to conceive of such a thing as mystery. To her, most problems were nothing. All knowledge existed for her to acquire. She had merely to study. Life lay before her like a partly colored map of the world. There were one or two places still to be crayoned. When she had finished school the chart would be filled in. She would know everything. She considered herself to be free from all the weaknesses in which Ward and her mother took pride and joy. Her dominant emotion was indignation, which, in conversation, focused to a desire to appear in a spotlight of infallibility.

“Mother,” she burst out. “I simply can’t go back to school this fall.”

“Why Dizzy, what do you mean?” Mrs. Harris asked.

“I mean that it’s an insult to my intelligence to keep me in that stupid school any longer. Why the teachers are all fossils and old fogies. There is only one teacher there that knows more than I do, and I’ve had all the courses he gives. And I know a boy that got into the University of Illinois last year by passing the examinations, and you only have to have fifteen credits to get in, and I have thir—”

' "Illinois is just one party after another, they say," said Ward. "Five men to every girl."

"I know I wouldn't like it," said Dizzy impatiently, "but I've got to get through college some way, and the quickest possible way is the one I want to take."

"And go away from home to a co-educational school when you are only sixteen years old?" said Mrs. Harris, attenuating her tones with the right degree of horror. "When I was your age I often thought I knew more than my elders, but by the time you are as old as I—"

"Oh, mother," said Dizzy, brutally, "don't pull that old stuff, for heaven's sake! I know when my intellectual capacity is greater than the person I am talking with. I know when I'm face to face with a person that is better educated than I am. Only one member of the teaching force is better educated than I. The rest are the usual muddle-headed, half educated members of the teaching profession that you find polluting the mind of the young American in all our institutions. I won't stand it. I won't be insulted by sitting down in a class and going to school to my intellectual inferiors. I won't. So you can just make up your mind to that, mother. I thought I'd better tell you as I am going to begin studying for the college entrance examinations this fall."

"My dear child, you will do nothing of the sort," said Mrs. Harris, but she was drowned out by Sari, who said hotly to Dizzie:

"Say, what's the idea of reading yourself cock-eyed? You're a disgusting shark. Everybody at school said so. You burst facts all the time. I should think you'd pop with all that mess of junk you've learned."

"Sari, really, your talk is hardly fit for a gentle-woman's table."

Sari launched her bomb:

"I'm against a college education for women, anyway, and I don't intend to go at all."

"Why Sari," gasped Mrs. Harris, alarmed by this sentiment more than by Dizzie's vehemence. "Why, what nonsense. How old-fashioned. You girls are always railing at me for being old-fashioned, yet I have always stood for things like the emancipation of women and college education for women, and—"

She rambled into a discourse that was very near tears and which was taken no notice of by the girls, each of whom dropped into her own thoughts immediately on the beginning of it. When she had argued herself to a climax, made her point triumphantly, confounding all of the arguments of the girls, she wandered on into a discussion of the evening's entertainment.

"Do you know that Mrs. Partridge warned mother not to let some young man named Wicker come near us?" Anita interrupted. "He is thought to have designs on Ward."

"Well, you can't laugh that off," said Sari, using one of her meaningless phrases.

Dizzy, conveying short-cake to her mouth stopped, convulsed. "No!"

"Well, really girls, I fail to see the point of this. Mrs. Partridge was kind enough to warn me not to let you become entangled with a young man whose reputation is extremely unsavory. I hope that you will pay attention to it."

She subsided. The girls went on talking and giggling over their coffee. Without the quiet gentle lake murmured and laughed and seemed to snuggle closer

to the shore; the moon, lemon colored and imperfectly oval, waited high above the old maple tree on the sand for the meeting of boys and girls in her little ring of moonshine.

CHAPTER III

I

THE white-clad feet of the three boys, Howard Blackton, Roderick Preston and Bill Wicker, printed blurred tracks in the smooth, soft sand, still warm from the sun that had baked it all day. They carried sticks, dragged logs and inexpertly built a beach fire. Away to the south along the water's edge the steel mills growled, exclaimed sonorously and vomited orange-red and luminous slag. Lake and sky reflected countless gradations of fire color as if the sleepy sun on its way to bed had been jerked for an instant into splendid contrast with the midnight blue velvet sky. A thousand shades merged softly into one—a single glow that slowly faded. And the stars once more seemed brilliant like a million candles that had just been lit.

Roderick Preston was a sketch in pen and ink done by Mr. James Montgomery Flagg; a drawing of a heroic character in American fiction. Handsome, courteous, with a natural grand pose enveloping him like a huge motor coat, his amiable and obvious excellencies dominated the other two. Mr. Bill Wicker of the unsavory reputation was small, dapper, with cinnamon brown eyes, and curly hair. A simplicity of manner verging on mild idiocy hid the wickedness with which he had been credited that afternoon.

To the party came Mrs. Field, her daughter Mary and son Frank. Mary's statuesque and heavy loveliness was caricatured in her mother, who looked as if she had been created in Mary's image and chucked

under the chin by a rakish god while the clay was still wet. Frank was called Frankie, and was noted locally for an indescribable walk; as if Frankie were upheld by invisible strings attached to the seat of his trousers, manipulated like a puppet by an unseen hand in the air; that he only obeyed the laws of gravitation by the greatest physical exertion; he looked as if he were always on the point of floating off into the heavens—hips first.

Mrs. Harris, Mrs. Field and Mrs. Partridge sat apart from the rest of the group around the fire. They were not themselves for the time, but creatures doing a social stunt. Mrs. Field was doing an act called, "The Mother of a Beauty"; Mrs. Partridge, "Those brutal men shall not molest my darling," and Mrs. Harris was saying,

"I live with my children as if each were the heroine of a story. I wonder what will happen next in that wonderful way which makes life so abundantly worth living. They have all been to me very sweet, deliciously human little stories, continuing in daily instalments before my very eyes. I smile and weep with them—"

Lap, lap, lap, said the water to the shore.

II

Ward was the center of the younger group. Through her good-nature Helene Patridge and Mary Field were drawn into the chatter. Ward was an adept in the graceful and romantic art of allurement, which more powerfully than any other touches in youth the sense of mystery.

And for her Roderick Preston conjured his pleasant bag of tricks like colored missiles kept afloat. He

talked well; he had a manner; a way; an ardor in his hopeful pursuit. At times he was like that aristocratic and offish dog, the collie. He hung on Ward's lightest word. His eyes followed her. If she smiled his tall lithe body shook with delight as if in the absence of a tail he was doing the best he could. If she frowned he shrunk and seemed to regret an inability to put a tail between his legs. If any other male spoke to her he seemed ready to jump at his throat. He was not only handsome and clean looking and young, but he seemed to set Ward off and she seemed to set him off, as if an abstract idea of beauty would inevitably make them realize the necessity of each for the other.

Mr. Wicker hung about, quite unable to get his usual stock conversation in with Ward. This conversation was known among his friends as Mr. Wicker's line, and the "way he worked." He turned with it at last to Sari, who was being besieged by the attentions of Frankie Field.

"That's a wonderful color you're wearing," said Wicker, "somehow it suits you."

"Oh do you think so," said Sari delighted by his emotional tone, and playing up to it without hesitation. "Most people haven't the sense to appreciate color—or me—"

III

Nita and Howard Blackton sat together.
They very soon discovered that their ideas coincided in a great many ways. They found, almost at once, that they both received stimulation from the editorials of Dr. Frank Crane; both thought that O. Henry was the greatest short story writer that ever lived; that it was immoral to read Guy de Maupas-

sant; that there was too much sex stuff written; that all literature that had sex in it was trashy; that any young person who determined to make a success early in life was bound to win out if he worked hard and stuck to his business; that a truly American type was the most admirable; that real honest to goodness men from the west never dressed for dinner when they came east, but appeared at banquets among dinner coated beings in tweed suits with large gold watch chains strung across them; that they were respected far more than underlings who donned tuxedoes and pretended to be accustomed to them.

Howard said, "I've an uncle in St. Paul. He's a pretty big fellow up there with the Eau Claire and Mankato railroad. When he goes down to New York he meets all the biggest men in the country. But he never even takes evening clothes with him. I'll tell you a really big man can get away with that sort of thing—"

"It's because he's big he can do it," said Anita.

"Yeh. That's it. Now you take some of these little fellows, they don't dare do a thing like that. But if a man has lots of money and is known as a big man, why people don't care what he does."

"That's what is so wonderful about America. It's so different from other countries. Now that could never happen in England."

They were both silent, possibly thinking sadly of England's horrible caste system.

"That's what I want to be," said Howard softly. "So big that I can do what I darn please."

"What would you do?"

"You mean if I had money?"

"No, if you were a really big man—arrived, I mean."

"Oh, I don't know. Golf, and tennis, and swim a lot and ride. I like to ride, don't you?"

"Yes," said Nita, who didn't care to admit that she had never been on a horse.

"I like big people," went on Howard. "Now my pal at college is sure to be the right sort. His father has an estate on the Riviera right next to the former governor of New York. Week ends, he used to leave college and play with America's upper crust, and back at school for five days he was perfectly simple, friendly with every one, and never mentioned the contrast of the other side of his life."

Nita, too, thought this was very wonderful of the young man.

In the minds of both of them romance reached its apex in these two incidents. The prince disguised as the pauper, hobnobbing with the pauper. It was what they called democracy—romantic democracy.

IV

Helene Partridge felt Wicker's gaze upon her, penetrating yet caressing. She had been warned against him. There was something attractive in his browned face with the hair curling back from the forehead.

"That orange colored sweater just suits you," he said in an undertone. "You ought always to wear that shade. In the firelight—" his voice drifted off, leaving her to infer the sentiment about the firelight. He threw himself forward and leaned upon his elbow in the sand to be near her.

Helene was not beautiful but she could be interesting. She gave herself the airs of the legendary, sought-after beauty who must continually rebuff the encroaching male with light sarcasm and badinage of

an uncomplimentary nature. She knew men thoroughly—in books—but she was so ignorant of them in real life that an ordinary, chance remark from one of them was often interpreted by her and resented as unspeakable lewdness. Men were creatures to whom the mysteries of life were all bare; experienced and ever watchful, to entrap foolish young girls. This attitude of mind made her ill at ease with young men without interfering with her ambition to be attractive to them.

"Yes," pursued Wicker, his eyes on the fire. "That color just suits your type. You're a different sort of type. You know you are."

"In what way?" asked Helene.

Wicker gave her a glance. "You know what I mean," he told her. She didn't, but she was afraid to seem to disappoint his expectations of her.

"No, I am sort of different," she admitted, without humor. "People expect me to conform to their standards. I can't—" She rambled on while Wicker wondered if he had really made an impression on her. By the time an opening came for his remark about his being a lonesome sort of a chap, he was sure of her interest. She was touched, thinking of her mother's misjudgment of him, wondering if he would ask to call.

V

Sari left the party and strolled along the lake in the darkness. On the sands by herself she began to dance, flinging herself about, flirting with the quiet waters, abandoning herself furiously to the night. Suddenly she found herself in a man's arms.

"Oh, Jasper, forgive me. I didn't mean it that night

on the launch. It was the moonlight! I never dreamed you would take it like this!"

Bill Wicker dropped his arms. "I'm not Jasper," he said, unimaginatively.

Sari stiffened. "Not Jasper? . . . Really, Warren, this is too much. I've forgiven a lot in you but this is the last straw—to come upon me in the darkness, when I said our little affair was over. I meant it, and—"

The dull wit of Wicker was still dormant. He said, frigidly, "You are mistaken again."

Sari, intoxicated with the success of her role, came forward and put her hands on his shoulders. "Dearest," she murmured, "Dearest Edwin—"

But before Bill could accept the role of Edwin, she was off, running back to the fire, flushed and elated. Wicker, at least, would fancy her a worse vamp than Ward.

VI

On the way to the house Wicker found himself beside Mary Field. "Yellow is just your color," he said in a low tone. "How well you know what to wear. I should like to see you in yellow all the time."

"Oh, thank you," said Mary, conventionally. She always played to keep young men in their proper place. Like Helene, she was forever on the lookout for them to do something improper, but lacked Helene's imagination of the horrors they might perpetrate.

"The sight of you by the fire tonight has meant a lot to me," went on Wicker. "I'm a lonesome sort of a chap, and beauty means—well, it means—"

"I know what it means to be alone in a strange town," said Mary, who had no notion at all, as she

had seldom been away from home over night without some member of the family. The conversation dribbled along

VII

"Let's run along by the lake before we go up to the house," said Sari to Frankie Field.

They raced like the children they were, beside the water.

"Say, Sari, I want to ask you something," said Frankie when they paused for breath.

"Ask away."

"Do you believe that—Well, do you think?" he paused and gulped. "What do you believe—"

"Yes," encouraged Sari, poised on the point of sarcasm, but refraining through an instinct that sympathy would be more flattering ultimately.

"Sari, do you believe that if young people are in love when they can't—well, you know—get married for years, that a man ought to—well—propose—or that they ought to go on just being friends?"

"I think they ought to be engaged if they are really in love," she said phrasing in her mind the form of her rejection of him.

"Well, I don't," said Frankie. "I think a man that really loved a girl would wait until he was in a position to support a wife before he asked her."

In keen disappointment Sari turned back to the house.

"It's getting pretty late. I think we'd better go home."

CHAPTER IV

I

AMONG the intricacies of the sex mystery there is perhaps no more interesting question to the young woman than the one: Why do some women inspire love in man after man, while others are unable to evoke the phenomenon in a single male? Each one of the four young Harris sisters had her private answer which she kept more or less to herself. With the certainty of youth, each knew that the solution was easy. Mysticism, thought Nita. Morals, thought Ward. Chemistry, thought Dizzy. Wiles, tricks, an art that anybody can learn, thought Sari.

After a party it was the amiable custom of these four to foregather in nightgowns to discuss the shortcomings of the individuals with whom they had been; and also sagely to give utterance to whatever philosophy came into their heads as they talked.

They sat crosslegged on the bed like four little girls on a pavement playing jacks.

"The Wicker complex!" said Sari.

They laughed. The figure of Wicker was to all of them ridiculous. Another comically misshapen character in which they could rejoice.

"The oldest line I've ever heard anyone pull," went on Sari. "In three parts—number one, that color thrills me to death, number two, you seem so different, you wonderful little girl—"

"He certainly has a soft spot," said Nita. Nita had classified all human beings under two heads: those

with, and those without soft spots. She observed this soft spot in all men art students, in girls who didn't make clubs at college, in most girls who confided their love affairs to her, in unsuccessful people. Helene Partridge's soft spot was her delusion that men were planning to commit some horrible crime against her person. Mary Field's was her stupidity. Mrs. Partridge's soft spot was her belief in the Don Juan capabilities of such men as Wicker. But these faults alone were not soft spots so much as they were the visible effects of the soft spots. Most successful, well balanced, well dressed people, were in the other class. Howard Blackton and Roderick Preston did not have soft spots. They were personable, agreeable young men, bound straight for success, with no ideas in their heads that had not been put there in academies of learning. They were distinctly worth while, distinctly eligible. "Real men." Rod for Ward and Howard for her.

"Roderick Preston seemed like a nice chap, I didn't talk to him much though," she said.

"He is," said Ward. "He's a peach. I felt sort of sorry for him, though. He was telling me about the hard time he had at boarding school. Nobody understood him, he's so sensitive—"

"She's sorry for the Preston person! Curses! Curses! Hasn't he got no matrimonial prospects?" asked Sari.

Dizzy, who was not interested in diagnosing reactions to boys, said suddenly, "Sometimes I think mother is demented. About religion, I mean. Coming up to the house from the beach she and Mrs. Partridge talked about some spiritual quality that most everybody but Ward lacks, as far as I could gather. Ward's spiritual as the dickens, Mrs. Par-

tridge says. Mother ate it up. She simply loved it. And then Mrs. Partridge shook her head and sighed and said that Ward would have to suffer for it. Mother sighed and said she feared so, too."

"Nut-tay!" Sari's slangy and meaningless comments emphasized her pleasant agreements and disagreements, both quite without thought. She was unoccupied with problems.

Nita opened her eyes wide. She said: "I've felt that about Ward in a dim sort of way. She's got a genius at being herself, or something. It's all vague in my mind. She has no definite religion, and yet, she's the religious type. I can sort of imagine her in a cloister—"

Sari tumbled backward and stifled her shrieks of laughter in the pillows. "Cloister, my eye. Ward in a cock-eyed cloister!"

"The man-hunting type, you mean," said Dizzy.

"I don't hunt men," said Ward, indignantly.

"Oh, yes," Dizzy went on, choking with laughter, brought on by Sari's appreciation. "Another thing that mother said was that this spiritual quality was what made Ward so popular with men."

"That's awfully interesting," said Nita, inspired. The idea was to her like one of those enormous mallets which huge and knotty-jointed men raise in the air and pound down on a machine designed for the purpose of registering their physical strength. Down, pounded the idea, up, shot the pointing finger—up and up, past Bruce Barton, past Dr. Frank Crane, past Orison Swett Madson, up almost to Mrs. Eddy. "I've often thought about that myself. What is it about Ward that makes men like her? That's it. Dizzy, you can talk all you want about Ward's vampi-

ness. It's the natural result of a child of your age reading *Man and Superman*, I suppose—”

“Don't tell me,” said Dizzy, who was too entertained to take offense. “She's Theda Bara, upside down and inside out. She knows it, too. She knows all about men. She has known from the cradle. She can slant her eyes, or cast them down, just so—to suit any type, and she does it with ease and without giving any more thought to it than I do to chewing prunes. If she sees a fat man with a glass eye, she subconsciously takes out the wile labeled, ‘For fat men with glass eyes,’ and flips it at him without even thinking about it—”

“That's just it. She does it unconsciously and because she was born that way; that's just the question. Why weren't we all born that way? I couldn't be a vamp if I tried.” This from Nita.

“I could,” declared Dizzy. “Some day when I have time I'll do it just to show you. You bring on a couple of men and I'll twist up my hair and make them fall with a couple of the oldest tricks in the basket—”

“It's easy,” interrupted Sari. “I've done it.”

“Oh, well, pooh!” said Nita. “You silly kids! If you call having boys like you, or making an occasional man take to you—if you call that vamping! I mean having them fall in wholesale droves, like Ward did at college. Every girl thinks she could be a vamp if she wanted to, but as a matter of fact, there are very few girls that are able to rope in two or three, much less a herd. Most girls strike attitudes, like Helene Partridge, and pretend they are too sweet and pure to attract a man. Ward is different. It's something inside of her. I know it is.”

She was thinking, “It is the most desirable thing in the world to be beautiful and fascinating—to be loved

and admired for personal qualities. If it comes from within, I can get it. Christian Science. Why not?"

II

This, too, was the essence of Ward's ambition, but Ward was quite unable to accept the gift she had of stirring love and admiration. Instead she was harassed by the thought that she must have an aim; she must be unselfish, useful, a model for the younger sisters—otherwise this prince of her mother's tale would ride on to make some more virtuous maiden his lawful princess. This fear had made her believe that what she desired to arouse passion for was a set of abstract virtues, all of which have never been assembled in one person. What she really wanted was to stir the emotion of adoration for herself in everybody, and particularly, in a future mate—she wanted to stir it anyhow, anyway, only to stir it. And she had been convinced by the propaganda of the love legend, that nobility of character would do the job. Ergo, she desired to be noble.

Thus, she deceived herself, and deceiving herself, was unhappy, for she was essentially honest and would have admitted, quite humbly, any shortcomings in herself that she could have been made to see. The faults of which she was conscious she earnestly strove to overcome. She demanded perfection in herself that she might be fit for her wonderful husband.

At the age of thirteen, she had found her ideal in the "Little Colonel" books, a series of stories for girls in which a young southern miss suffers conscientious scruples about her admirers through ten volumes. All her love problems are met with a quotation from a Victorian poet, given in an idealized darky dialect.

Ward, too, had found quotations to fit her problems. As she grew older she saw herself in every magazine heroine, especially those by writers who habitually declare in full page advertisements that they desire to fill their readers with the sense that the world is better than it is; that human nature is after all, overflowing with goodness; that the difficulties of life can all be met thus: (1) with sunshine in the heart, (2) with a fitting quotation on the lips.

Ward, then, was an almost perfect example of what is called a high-minded girl. She was not, like Nita, an egotist with second-rate ideals who screened her aims behind current notions of propriety. Neither was she like Sari, careless of right and wrong. Nor did she have the skeptical cock-surety of Dizzy, who rejected the sentiments that held Ward with such rainbow bands.

CHAPTER V.

I

MORNING.

Rose Mrs. Harris freighted, as always, with the importance of being a mother, subtly conveying in walk, manner, tone, even in her first meeting with her own eyes in the mirror her conviction that the early bird catches the worm.

Nita got up. Ward got up. The woman Olive dragged herself out of bed and down into the kitchen where she hindered Ward in getting breakfast. It was part of Ward's conception of herself to take work from her mother's shoulders. Olive, nearly incapacitated by feeble-mindedness, was a mere symbol of a housemaid.

Sari appeared, unexpectedly, while they were eating breakfast. Usually she rose later than the rest of the family. "Might as well ride down with you Nita," she said casually. "Got to shop before my lesson."

When they had hurried off with the brisk importance of an early morning departure, Dizzy went up to the room she shared with Sari, closed the door carefully and sat down to her desk to study.

College in the fall! College! It was a thrilling possibility. She began tracing with a pencil on a sheet of paper on which she had written:

Required	Covered
4 years English	3
2 years history	2
1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ year French	2
2 years science	2
$2\frac{1}{2}$ years mathematics	2
3 years Latin	3
<hr/>	
15 credits required for college entrance.	12
	credits covered
Exams	
4th year English	
$1\frac{1}{2}$ years French	
$\frac{1}{2}$ year solid geometry	
<hr/>	
3 Examinations.	

She was not sure that the requirements were correct. She had written to the University of Illinois to find out if they would accept her. She sat looking over the requirements and thinking about them. She was suspicious of the fourth-year English course. It was too easy. Perhaps they wouldn't accept an examination for it. She might arrange to take a short summer course. She was confident that she could master solid geometry. Plane had been easy enough. And as for French, she could read it quite easily. She had no fear of failing in that after a little study of the grammar. Fortunately she had the required amount of science.

Dizzy had an extraordinarily quick and adaptable mind, an immense capacity for work, and like her sisters, a pulling, drawing ambition. As naively sure that she could acquire all knowledge, as Ward was that the prince was on the way, Dizzy had made up

her mind to finish college knowing everything by the time she was twenty. Then she would begin to write books.

She wished that her mother could be brought to see how important it was. If only she could have a tutor. Mother was so dense about things like that. Now, if only father had been alive—he would have been so proud to have her trying to get into college before her class. He would have tutored her himself. He would have found out all about it for her and might even have been able to get her into the University of Chicago. Father had always understood her so well. No one would ever know how much she had lost in losing him so early in life. If she had only been Anita and could have known him until she was eighteen. None of the rest of the family appreciated him or loved him as she did.

II

Sari and Nita sat on the suburban train staring gravely at nothing. They were jolted like moulds of jelly carried on a tray by a hurrying waiter. Through the dingy train window the dazzling silver cloth of the lake met the baby blue satin sky. In their mouths was the faintly nauseating taste of hot, unstirred indoor air, smelling of oil, steam and loathsome chemicals meant to purify it. The unbearable roar of wheels stifled thought like the beating of blood in the ears during a high fever.

"The dear old first of August!" said Sari.

"What about it?"

"Something rather good is going to happen. By the way, Parkman, Jones Parkman is going to watch the Carlotta Wilson dancers at the studio today.

Maybe they'll get a New York engagement this winter."

"Wait until mother finds out that Carlotta Wilson is a professional. Just wait. Who is Jones Parkman?"

"Jones Parkman? The cock-eyed Jones Parkman? Haven't you ever heard of him? Oh well, he's not so much. He's no Ziegfeld—"

Nita's eyebrows asked superciliously, "the same sort of thing?" She said: "I hope you don't think you're going to be one of the Carlotta Wilson dancers. Of course she promises all her pupils that she'll take them in to her company if they are good enough. That's the catch. It takes years and years of training before you are good enough, and in the meantime you've given up and married, or started to teach school or something. She just trades on her professional position to get flappers like you to think she'll put them on the stage."

Sari said nothing, but smiled mysteriously to herself. She was already training with the Wilson dancers. She was not greatly excited by the advent of Parkman. For the present the Chicago engagement—to be staged at one of the more pretentious north side hotels—was enough to feed her secret dreams.

III

She left Nita at Van Buren and Michigan streets, and hurried off down the boulevard. She assumed an important expression. Sari had studiously molded her whole carriage into showing a pre-occupation with large inner affairs, an aloofness, a blankness that was pregnant with meaning. A thrust of shoulders, a lift

of head, a wiping away of vividness from the face, and the thing was done. Sari, in company with hundreds of other young whippersnappers, walked haughtily down the avenue, shrieking their consciousness that they were being stared at by lounging men in their carefully assumed expression of unconsciousness.

Jones Parkman was a short stocky Scotchman, just past fifty, one of those wistful sporting souls who is always on the point of bringing out something more splendid than the Follies, but who, unhappily, nearly always misses what he calls his big chance. He had eyes as blue as the lake had been that morning, and with some of the same inscrutability as the water.

As the Carlotta Wilson dancers went through their numbers for him, Sari was conscious that he looked at her a good bit. When the dance was finished, and while they still stood about in groups in their dancing costumes, Carlotta Wilson was called to the telephone. Sari moved off by herself over to a bar and took hold of it with some hazy idea that Jones Parkman might come over and offer to make her a star at once.

He approached her.

Behind his eyes something seemed to ebb and flow endlessly. As she looked at him his gaze seemed to swell and envelope her with the sense of the lake around her, then to shrink until his eyes were two steel-blue spurts from a faucet.

"You dance well," he said.

"Oh," said Sari quickly, "I'm no dancer. I'm an actress essentially. I regard dancing as the truest way of feeling art. When I have dissolved the essence in my soul I shall express it on the speaking stage!"

"My God, girl," said Parkman, who was approximately Sari's age mentally. "You're interesting!" His eye pupils shrunk as if he had come suddenly into light.

He said no more as Carlotta Wilson came back, but before he left he managed to command Sari to meet him for luncheon in the Congress Hotel at one.

Sari's pulses leaped up. Press agent stories of actresses made over night, always in the background of her mind, came forward now, and combined excitingly with the Lakeshore Women's Club theory that the actress leads a life of shame. She wondered if she dared meet him, and knew that she would in the same skeptical thought picture that she saw of herself being brutally attacked.

"He's awfully fatherly, somehow," thought Sari as she leaned toward the mirror, patting the powder puff on her nose. "Anyway he can't do anything to me at luncheon."

IV

Across the table from him she answered his questions at random, truthfully or imaginatively as she preferred.

"How old are you?"

"Eighteen!"

"Family in Chicago?"

"Oh, yes."

"Tell me about them."

"I must support my mother who is a widow and my two sisters——"

He began to absorb her eyes with his misty blue ones.

"What sort of parts would you like to do?"

"I'd like to do Shaw!" This was Sari's conception of the sophisticated intellectual thing to say. Jones Parkman smiled patronizingly, saying nothing. With his coffee and cigarettes he said,

"I could give you a chance to understudy in a play I am putting on in New York. I might even get you a chance to play it in a road company later. And the year after—well—Broadway, perhaps, who knows! Yes, I think in two years I could have you on Broadway."

Sari choked. It was unbelievable. Was she dreaming! "Oh," she said with her first genuine sincerity, "you're so good to me. How can I ever repay you."

Jones Parkman smiled, a far-away smile.

"By working hard. My people work for me and love me. Then after a while, they become great artists. This is the only reward I seek."

He pressed her hand. She pressed his warmly, he was so fatherly. And yet, she was not deceived, except on the top layer of her mind that wanted to be deceived. He looked into her eyes, smiling tenderly.

"So she likes Shaw." He shook his head. "Could that soft, curved mouth utter those sarcasms, jibes at humanity?" He thought it over, and decided that Sari's lips could never be the medium for Mr. Shaw, whose lines, it chanced, he had never read. "No, no! Ah, you have so much to learn, my little child, my little Sari, so much to learn!"

"But you will teach me," said Sari deliberately allowing herself to be moved, and enjoying it deliciously.

He re-clasped the hand lying under his.

"It's possible that I might be able to introduce a dance for you in the third act. Would you like that?"

"Oh," Sari saw herself on Broadway. She was really grateful,—exhilarated. "Oh! you're wonderful!"

"Could you work up a dance?" His voice was a little thick.

"Oh, yes, I have a dance I wish I could show you. It might do?"

"Where could we go? I should like to see it."

"Up to the studio, of course."

"Oh, no."

"Miss Wilson leaves at 2:30, if I phone her, she would let me use it this afternoon."

"Well, that might do. Tell you. I've some business to attend to. I'll meet you up there at three if you can fix it with Miss Wilson. I'd rather not have her know, if you don't mind, as I am making different arrangements with her for the present."

V

At three he found Sari in the studio in her practice costume. Followed a scene to draw confirmatory nods from those believers in the love legend who lay stress on its hackneyed by-products.

Sari adjusted the needle on a record.

"My God, but you're beautiful!"

Far back in Sari's mind satisfaction registered. A man had said to her my-god-you-are-beautiful.

When she had danced through the record, Parkman drew her down beside him.

"You're tired! Here! Put up your feet!" He drew a second chair but Sari demurred. "My God, don't you feel at ease with me?"

She smiled into his eyes.

"You're tired, aren't you. You know you're charming." He leaned forward to put his hand on her shoulder. "You're going to work hard for me. And, and I'm going to make you the greatest actress in the world."

He was as much the dupe of melodrama as Ward, Mrs. Harris or Mrs. Partridge, who would have been filled with horror if they had known of the situation. This man's strained interest in her was novel, interesting to Sari. A sense of triumph over her mother filled her mind as she looked at the legendary enemy of young girls, who was frowning thoughtfully.

"You need a little more leg work, I think."

"Yes! I do these exercises every day!" She sprang to her feet, ran away from him to the bar, and began going through a few motions. He followed her across the room.

"Sari, dear," he said gently. "You're not a child. You know what life is?"

Sari considered. Would it be best to pretend complete innocence?

"Yes," she admitted, slowly.

"Well, dear girl, there is one difficult thing about acting. And that is that you *must* know life before you can interpret it. There are certain things you will have to learn. You see you're just a child now, wholly unawakened. You remember what you said about feeling through dancing? Well, there is a much greater way of feeling art, and that is through love."

"Yes," said Sari, making a jump, playing the child and hippety-hopping across the room to the victrola.

She put on a record, presumably to amuse him, and left the room calling that she would be back in a moment. She was out of the dressing room in her street clothes in three minutes, saying as she looked at her wrist watch, "Gracious, I've got to go. I promised to meet my sister at four."

He crossed the room and embraced her. "I must see you again today. Will you have dinner with me?"

"Yes," said Sari, "only I must go now, this minute." She walked toward the door, his arm around her. He was breathing heavily, his mouth close to her neck.

"Fate is so wonderful," said Jones Parkman. "Only think, this morning we didn't know each other."

"Yes," murmured Sari.

He turned her head and fixed his eyes on her. Sari stared back, a guileless, wileless gaze, thinking, the cock-eyed idiot, the cock-eyed idiot, he can't get any power over me if he stares in my eyes all day. But the strain was telling on her. A little muscle at the corner of her mouth gave a twitch.

He laughed triumphantly, and folded her in his arms. Sari did not move though the kiss was long, and very unpleasant. Her hand was on the doorknob.

When his hold relaxed, and he was bracing his mind for another bit of sentimentality, Sari opened the door, and stepped gaily out, laughing. This was a real bit of acting, as she was horribly nauseated.

"See you at seven," she called.

"At the Congress," he shouted down the hall after her, smiling, waving, comic.

She ran on down toward the elevators.

VI

When she got to the street she ran, losing herself in the crowds, powdering herself with people of daylight, hurrying, wholesome people. All at once she realized that she had left her purse in the studio. She felt in her pockets, just ten cents. It would get her home slowly on the street cars. She went into a drug store.

"I've only ten cents," she told a white-robed clerk, "but I'd like an antiseptic mouth wash."

"Sore throat?" asked the sympathetic boy.

"Yes." He gave her a small bottle and she hurried to a department store. Over a wash bowl she swished the gargle back and forth, through her teeth, and poured the rest down the drain. Then she hunted up Nita and went home to a hot bath and bed. She couldn't face the family talk at dinner. Her mother came and sat beside her, feeling a futile wish to communicate with Sari, to help her, but Sari refused all offers of supper, cold cloths on her head, companionship.

She turned and tossed on the bed, writhing, and stronger and stronger, as the hours separating her from the incident grew, she felt the hand of Parkman on her . . . his kiss . . . Toward dawn, she slept clinging to Dizzy's unconscious form.

CHAPTER VI

I

AT SEVEN, Ward made her daily pilgrimage to the water's edge. The old black pier was a ragged roadway over the blue still lake, bright and calm with the soothing vigor of size and strength. She picked her way carefully to the end of it over perilous boards placed there by neighborhood fishing men. The sun had dropped behind the green foliage on the shore. In the foreground the aureate sands were soft like new-fallen snow. In such a setting the love legend might unfold.

Roderick Preston, bathed and dressed in white after a grimy day at the steel mills, was drawn to the beach by a vague undefined hope of seeing her. He came to her over the flimsy board path, and they rather breathlessly watched the sun spread a gauze of pink and gold over the turquoise blue between them and the shore. They were stirred, not so much by the shimmering and silent beauty, as with the consciousness of themselves at the colored heart of it. Ward looked at Rod and felt his joyous, youthful charm. She felt her youth, her charm, her beauty, too. Their talk was decorated with the happy meeting of their eyes.

II

Nita at this minute was strolling leisurely down the boulevard to the home of Mrs. Paul de Remy, who called herself a Christian Science practitioner, though

her church did not recognize her as one. The familiar principle of mysticism that concentration through prayer is able to bring about definite material results had been grasped by Mrs. de Remy's feeble intellectual machine. She called it working in science, and understanding that certain things which she desired were about to come to pass. She did not so much endeavor to heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons and cleanse the leper, which is the ideal and aim of the sincere practitioner in his religion, as she tried to heal sick purses, raise dead loves, and cast out demons in the shape of "animal" natures which did not believe in "science."

"Oh, good evening, dear, I'm so happy to see you," her voice lilted as she saw Anita coming up the walk. "Isn't this a lovely evening? I'm always so happy on nights like this."

She was a pretty little woman of forty, slim, rose-complexioned, who looked ten years younger. She lived in a small bungalow with her only child, a boy of twelve, who "worked in Science every morning (it was too cute for anything) to gain dominion over error," typified in his alert young mind by his teachers and the gang at school. Her husband existed vaguely, sometimes in the south, and sometimes in the east. He had a very dark thought, she confided in Nita, and was very much the *animal* type. And he was opposed to Science, and so she had been compelled to give him up.

Twenty-two or three years before, a young boy of nineteen, who was studying to be an artist, had entreated her to marry him, and on her refusal had tragically gone off to New York and become a well known sketcher of comic pictures. Mrs. de Remy had followed his private adventures with some difficulty

through paragraphs in the newspapers, and through one interview with him which she had obtained after considerable trouble about five years before when she was in New York. She now was "working in science" to know that she would be released from Mr. de Remy in order to marry Mr. Murphy, the cartoonist. Mr. Murphy, being burdened with one wife, his third, knew nothing of this romantic scheme of Mrs. de Remy. Nita sometimes suspected that he might even have forgotten his declaration at the age of nineteen that Mrs. de Remy had ruined his life. She never hinted this to Mrs. de Remy, who was trying to "understand" that God would arrange everything.

It was Mrs. de Remy who had first suggested to Nita that God would help her in finding a husband. "We'll just know that God is your husband," Mrs. de Remy had said in her soft, clear, even tones, "and then you can't make a mistake. You are bound to get the right one. I'll work for you, dear. I'll work to know that you will meet the right one, and then it's sure to come right."

This "working" of Mrs. de Remy's had so far resulted in two definite material things; a new pair of very smart shoes for Master Paul de Remy, and the appearance on the scene of Mr. Howard Blackton.

As soon as preliminaries were over Nita hastened to tell Mrs. de Remy about the meeting.

"And he seems like the right one, does he," said Mrs. de Remy, a little sympathetic laugh in her voice. "We must work to know that he is the right one. I suppose he has lots of money?"

Nita replied a little coldly. Mrs. de Remy had talked about money to her before. It jarred. "I don't know."

"Well, you must find out. Men have absolutely no principles. I would never have been married to Mr. de Remy today if I had been a little wiser about those things. We have to be careful, because men will lie. I thought that Mr. de Remy was wealthy before we married. He had a car, and a home, both good-looking, and he gave me wonderful presents. And his business! Well, after we were married, I found that his business was absolutely failing, and the house was mortgaged—it had to go, and the car wasn't paid for!"

Her mouth twisted itself into sullen lines as she remembered her awakening. But her gaze softened and became benignant again as she put her mind on Nita's affairs. "You won't make that mistake. You can have him looked up in Dun's, you know."

"I don't care about his having money, anyway," said Nita.

"Oh, well, of course we know in Science that those things are all really unnecessary as God is our supply, but at the same time I think we ought to have a clear understanding about all material things before marriage, anyway. Did you ask him if he was interested in Science?"

"No, I didn't ask him, but I'm pretty sure he isn't. Don't you know, young men aren't very often."

"But he isn't opposed to it, is he?"

"Oh, I don't think so. He seems very normal, and healthy—as if he came from good stock, and he shows good breeding, too. I think that's the main thing. He seemed to sort of like me, I don't know. Most young men fall for my sister Ward."

"And he didn't? Well, I think it's a demonstration, I really do!" Her eyes became misty. She did not mean to be unflattering.

"I don't think it matters about his having money,"

said Nita, hesitatingly. "I mean, if he hasn't any. There is something about him that makes you know he's going to be successful. He's got all the typical American push and go. And I think that's what counts."

"Yes, I do, too. That was just the way it was with Tom Murphy. He said to me, if I'm not a success as an artist, I'm going to get into something else, but whatever I get into, I'm going to be a success. And now he's got to be one of our foremost artists. You could just feel as you say, that he would."

"Yes," said Nita hastily. She had heard about Tom Murphy's great success before. Mrs. de Remy's ignorance of art was so great that it made even Nita squirm to hear her talk about it. "Mr. Blackton seems to be just the sort I want to marry."

"Well, dear, I'll work to know, then, that nothing can come between you—no error that is, and that you are already married in divine love? You want me to keep on working for you?"

"Oh, yes, if you will. Of course I work some myself, but—"

"But you feel that you need help. Yes, dear, I understand." Her voice was infinitely gentle. "Well, dear, I'm expecting a patient soon. I'm so glad you ran up to see me. Come up again tomorrow night, and if you are worried about anything during the day, just call me up."

III

Leaving Mrs. de Remy, Nita strolled slowly back along the boulevard to make a call on Mary Field. Dusk was coming down on the street like sober colored confetti, motors buzzed by like bees, the round gold

heads of the street lamps rippled on with the wave-like movement of a line of men seating themselves rhythmically, one by one.

Bill Wicker was calling on Mary, Nita found. To Mary this was the opening chapter of her love tale. She was tense now in her effort to live up to the artless, girlish human that she conceived herself as being.

"This morning I was up at six to get breakfast for father. Mother does not arise until a quarter to seven. I had such a time frying the eggs. I was really very clumsy. I broke the yolk of one. Wasn't that shocking? Then after breakfast I did up the dishes. Mother wiped them. She always helps me a little during the day. Then I swept the living rooms and cleaned the windows. I love cleaning, don't you? Then it was lunch time and I got luncheon for my little sister and my——"

Nita made her escape as soon as possible and went to find Helene Partridge. "Ye fishes! Something revolutionary has happened," she announced to Helene. "Little Bill Wicker is calling on the Village Beauty!"

"Good Lord, haven't men queer taste?" demanded Helene fiercely. "You know he tried to make up to me last night, but Good Heavens, I thought he was a joke!"

CHAPTER VII

I

It was several weeks before Nita saw Mrs. de Remy again. She had no more need of "treatments." Then one hot afternoon, late in July, it chanced that they took the same homeward-bound train from town.

"Isn't this lucky. I'm so glad. I hate this long ride alone, don't you?" was Mrs. de Remy's greeting. "How have you been getting along? You haven't been over for some time. I do miss our little visits."

Mrs. de Remy wondered if Nita was still interested in young Mr. Blackton.

"Oh, yes," Nita laughed. She had a laughing look that was deprecating, like the expression of a puppy caught on the dinner table—a naughty look, charming, that seemed to say, doggedly, frankly, "I know this is against my pretensions, but you have suspected me all along, haven't you?"

"Have you seen him lately?" Mrs. de Remy achieved intimacy in her tone.

"Yes, I saw him yesterday. He had on white flannels. He looks quite beautiful in white flannels. His looks are so changeable. I believe it is the boy and the man in him. Sometimes he looks kind of round-faced and sweet, and then I don't like his looks at all. And then he looks hard and quite a picture type. You know what a respecter of looks I am. My tender sentiments fluctuate as I like How's looks or don't."

"It's the artist in you," said Mrs. de Remy. She attributed most of Nita's qualities to the genius she

believed Nita to possess. For some obscure reason she longed to shine as a patroness of the arts, and she passionately admired Nita's commonplace drawings.

Nita was too smart not to know that Mrs. de Remy was a fool. She had a low opinion of Mrs. de Remy's powers of reasoning, but had a sort of attachment for her on account of what she called her spiritual insight.

Nita was her only confidant in Lakeshore concerning the animality of Mr. de Remy, and her love for Tom Murphy.

II

"Do you think there is any sign that Mr. Blackton has responded any to the treatments?"

Nita laughed. "That sounds so funny," she said with some embarrassment.

"Well, of course, we're not treating him. That would be error, of course. I'm only just working to know that God is your husband, and if he's the right one he's bound to respond to this. Have you noticed anything?"

"He walks by the house every night that he doesn't come over to see me," she said, laughing. "That shows some interest, don't you think? He just strolls by in a sort of casual off-hand way. I'm usually sitting on the porch, so I see him about every night."

"Isn't that splendid? Really, I think it's a demonstration. Has he proposed or said anything about marriage?"

"No," said Nita, uncomfortable under this frank question. "He treats me as if I were his sister. I don't know why he doesn't make love to me. Of course I'm glad he doesn't. I hate all this mushiness.

Roderick Preston is madly in love with Ward. He acts like a perfect slave. But then men always act that way to Ward."

"Never you mind, dear, I have a feeling—a sort of intuition. We practitioners do get these intuitions at times, you know—that he will propose very soon. I'm going to work for you a little while now."

III

Mrs. de Remy got off at the station before Anita's and so Anita was left on the train alone for a few minutes. Mrs. de Remy always did inspire her with a thought that she would be successful in whatever she was undertaking. That was her charm for Anita. That was the charm of Christian Science. Nita began to concentrate; in the phraseology of Mrs. de Remy, she began to know that she would see Howard that evening. She had missed him the night before.

As she stepped from the train, hot and dusty, Lakeshore was cool and caressing—a soothing open country after the clatter of the Loop and the roar of the train. At the foot of the street in a small car sat Howard Blackton, blushing and looking sheepish. Nita hurried to him with the elated consciousness that she had made a "demonstration."

"It's Wick's car. Belongs to his uncle or somebody. It's loaned for a few weeks. Thought you might come in on this train, and as I happened to be down this way, wondered if you wouldn't like to go swimming before dinner?"

Nita exclaimed her pleasure at the idea.

In the later afternoon sunlight the water was a placid turquoise. They swam out to the end of the

pier and looked back. The water glimmered gold around the shore to the west.

"It's a pity we can't see the fireworks from the shore," said Nita, loving the cool water on her body.

"I don't know, it's sort of nice to have it rare like this," was Howard's comment. He ducked beneath the water as if frightened at his own tremendous poetry of feeling.

Nita felt that it was a big moment. Of course. The two of them seeing a scene of beauty together with no one else there. It was like a story in a magazine. She would like to paint a picture of it, but it was one of those rare things which you simply couldn't put down on paper. Nita frequently indulged herself in moments of sentimentality like this when there was no possibility of its interference with her future plans.

IV

Sari, dainty and saucy-looking in a short organdy dress of flame color, beckoned from the shore. Wicker was standing beside her.

"Doesn't she look like a poster, with her bobbed hair flying like that?" asked Nita.

"By jinks, she does," said Howard. "I haven't got your artistic eye, and so I didn't think of it. She looks mighty pretty, though."

He swam a few strokes, and then ventured to add—"Like the rest of her sisters."

Nita came to the shore in an excellent mood. Howard, feeling that he was becoming very adept in the game of talking to women, also felt happy.

"Dinner's ready," said Sari, who had been snubbing Wicker with great gusto.

"I've enjoyed my swim," said Nita, turning to How-

ard, who was coming up from the water with a staggering step and shaking the water out of his ears.

"Oh, just a minute. There's one thing I'd like to ask you."

They all paused and waited for Howard. He came up slowly, and stood shifting his weight from one foot to the other without saying anything.

"Well," said Sari, coldly, as Nita was regarding him with no show of disfavor at this delay.

"I'm afraid I'm making a perfect nuisance of myself, but I was wondering whether I could come over with Rod tonight. He tells me he is calling on Ward."

"Yes, do," said Nita. "I'll be glad to see you."

"May I come too?" said Wicker, looking at Sari.

"Ask my sister," said Sari. "I am engaged for the evening, but perhaps she can entertain you."

"See you later, then," said Nita running off gaily, pretending not to have heard this conversation. On the sidewalk she waited for Sari.

"I think you might really show that you have had some breeding, once in a while," said Anita. "It was horribly rude the way you came in with that 'Well!' at poor Howard. Like a school teacher."

"Good Heavens, I thought he was going to stand there all night. He acted as if he was getting up his nerve to propose to you."

Mrs. Harris in white, and with an unnecessary folded parasol in her hand came toward them smiling.

"What have my little buds been doing?"

"Nita's just made a feeble-minded date, and I've just turned one down. That moron, Bill Wicker, keeps asking me, and asking me!"

Mrs. Harris was pleased.

"My little girl has taken her mother's words seriously about Mr. Wicker. It never does to associate with

dangerous men. You can't play about with fire without getting singed."

Sari's childish temper flamed at this maternal interpretation. Nita winked. "You're a dear, Nita," said Sari in an undertone. "I'd like to tell you something about the first of August, but it's got to be kept a secret and I can't."

"You arouse my interest," said Anita amiably. She was quite indifferent.

As they went up the steps of the house Dizzy flourished a letter at her oldest sister. "You'll help me break the news to mother, won't you, Anita dear? It came in the afternoon mail, and it shows I can do it. I told you all I could but you wouldn't believe. Nita, will you help me with mother?"

Nita opened the letter and read it.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

Miss Elizabeth Harris,

Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Madam:

In reply to your letter of July 7 I beg leave to state that we will accept credits on certificate without examination from fully accredited high schools. For work done under a private instructor it will be necessary for you to pass our entrance examinations in order to secure entrance credit. If you will send in to this office a statement of all of your high school work I shall be glad to inform you concerning your standing for admission.

Yours very truly,

JAMES M. JONES,
Chief Clerk.

S/S

"Honey, dear, you wouldn't care for Illinois."

"Will you help me?" asked Dizzy impatiently.

"Well, Dizzy, I'll do all I can—you'll have to give me a few days to think it over."

She went into the house to dress and promptly forgot all about it.

CHAPTER VIII

I

THE DAY before Sari's stage debut, Olive announced crossly that she was leaving.

"I'm going to be married. I've always been used to being married, and I've never been used to doing this kind of work, and with you girls taking a bath every day I don't know what. I've always been used to thinking of myself as a clean person, but I never bathed oftener than once a week in my life. It ain't natural. And it'll ruin your health going in swimming and then coming right back and bathing, see if it don't. My second husband caught cold and died from taking a bath. He caught pneumonia, but land, he never bathed as often as what you girls do."

"That will do, Olive," said Sari.

Olive left the room.

"Sari, you make me ill with your airs," said Dizzy. "The poor old thing hasn't been used to being treated like a dog."

"Ye gods," said Sari. "Nothing in this house but fight, fight, fight. I certainly am glad I'm not going to be here much longer."

"I'm glad I'm not," said Dizzy, heatedly.

"My, my," said Anita. "Where are you two pleasant little youngsters going? Children should love each——"

"Love," said Dizzy. "She insults me. She insults me every time she opens her mouth. I lie in bed beside her and writhe under her insults. Why should

I be expected to be interested in the sort of shoes that are in fashion? Why should I care whether a French vamp is coming in or going out of style? She insults me when we go along the street by looking into shop windows. She insults me by her silences, her gestures. Everything is an insult——”

“She’s been reading Russian literature,” said Sari, laughing and shrugging her shoulders. “That’s the way all the characters talk.”

“If I weren’t going away to college this fall,” went on Dizzy——. This question raised once more, Mrs. Harris found herself against Ward and Anita, who had been won over to Dizzy’s cause. Nita suggested that Dizzy be allowed to enter a slightly exclusive girls’ school in Ohio which offered junior college courses.

II

When they rose from the table Nita and Ward strolled to the lake. It was just after sunset and the beach was as serene as an old gray woman who has lived her years calmly, happily. Michigan babbled and talked like a brook. The sands received their bodies graciously as they sank down for a long sisterly chat.

“Ward, I know I can be a decent artist if I can dig in and study for a year. When I see those other kids at the Institute who have studied for three years—well, I know that if I had studied that long I wouldn’t put over the kind of pictures they do.”

“I sort of thought you’d given up the idea of New York since you’d met Howard Blackton.”

Nita laughed self-consciously. “There are a lot of things I want to do before I get married. I mean to work myself silly in New York.”

"I'll miss you awfully."

"Not half as much as I'll miss you, Ward. I'll be longing for your head and shoulders and legs and arms, many a time when I want a model. I won't be able to get another one that's put together like you are. You're such a beauty, Ward. We accept your beauty as a family asset. And it's not mere physical beauty either. I believe that your face shows what you are—if you're nice you have a nice face——"

"I have the queerest feeling about myself sometimes," said Ward. "I couldn't say this to anybody but you, because it would sound conceited. But when I have the feeling all through me that I'm just right, I wonder if it isn't all a dream, and if other people who seem ugly aren't beautiful to themselves. I don't know whether I can make you understand? Being beautiful to me is so vivid, so real that it's unreal, like a lunatic's vision. I wonder if every woman doesn't have the same delusion. Perhaps it's all a dream, and I'm only imagining that I'm beautiful as a man might fancy himself a genius when he is only an ordinary mortal. My mirrors and ears might be in a conspiracy. It's so strongly in my inner consciousness that I am beautiful."

"I've had the feeling that all life around me is a dream," said Anita, "and that I'm the only reality in it. That feeling of beauty clear through you gives you poise, and maybe that's your secret, Ward dear, that Helene and Mary are anxious to know."

"When I sit here and talk to you, Anita, I love you better than any one else in the world. You are so easy to talk to, you understand so well. You seem so just right in your way of looking at things. And yet, in another way you're awfully cold, Anita. You can go off to New York and leave us all without a

word. You can marry sort of cold-bloodedly. You can drop people when you don't want them any more without another thought. Sometimes I think, you just like all of us because it's easier for you to like the people around you."

Anita was hurt. "Oh, that's not so. I'd never find another person in the world I would feel the same way to that I do to you. I like Dizzy a lot, too. What you say may be true of mother and Sari. I feel a sense of duty toward mother, and toward Sari, nothing much. She's a silly little fool, I think."

"I love mother," said Ward. "There's something awfully fine and delicate about her."

"Yes, there is. But I'm not at all sure that I would care if I never saw her again." She paused, still hurt, thinking of Ward's charge against her. "I could get along all by myself without any of you, that's true. But I should miss you, Ward. I'm not dependent on anyone, but I shall be unhappy—get like Helene—if I don't marry and I am not cold blooded about it either. I can feel a sense of uselessness, horrible discontent creeping over me. When I marry I shall become thoroughly practical. I do want to know nice people, and I haven't time for people that aren't—well, worth while, people who do things. I want to be worth knowing myself, and I want a normal life—husband and children."

"I'm sorry I said that," said Ward. "It's because I feel badly, because you're going away, I suppose."

"You hit a sore spot. You still think it, though, don't you?"

"Well, some. I honestly didn't mean it bitterly."

"From now on, Ward, I think I'll have to cultivate you assiduously. It weighs upon me that I have

neglected you. I wanted to ask you how you liked Howard Blackton, really."

"You're not serious about him?"

Again Nita was hurt. "Don't you like him?"

"Yes, I like him lots. He's so clean-looking. No one could help liking him. But it seems, somehow, as if you could get some one really splendid. You're much the nicest person in our family. You should marry a really splendid, great man."

"I don't want a great man. I don't look forward to a big success. I'm not a genius myself and don't fancy myself as one. I think that people who take themselves and their work as seriously as Dizzy does are always a little ridiculous. But I do want a man that's successful, and well, commonplace, but not common. Howard Blackton will be successful."

"Yes, he'll be that, all right," said Ward. "Ten years from now you can just see him with a family and a home in the suburbs."

"The great endeavor to draw no-account little pictures and get them in print looks as little and unimportant to Howard as spending a lifetime carving one of those complex, hideous ivory vases in the Art Institute."

"You won't have much in common."

"We don't speak the same language. He puts down things like Christian Science as a sort of bosh. Just plain figures, and earthbound business and straight stuff interests him. And it seems sort of flavorless to me."

"But why, why, why, then?"

"Darn it! I'm crazy about him. He was telling me about a friend of his and I could see it was his ideal of a girl and marriage. She was this man's "college girl" for four years. She was good-looking and

had had everything but was perfectly happy to live in a little apartment and cook and so forth—just make a wonderful home for a man. And he told me this when I'd just spieled my head off about the joys of arting."

"And yet you think you'll marry him?"

"I will if he proposes to me——"

"Hasn't he proposed yet?"

"Oh, Ward; he's got to propose, so I can have it off my mind. I've been worried about it a little, and it's got to come right. Oh, I know it will. Then I can go to New York with a clear conscience. You know he's going to California next month, anyway, and we'll have a whole continent between us. We must be engaged."

"You'll probably meet some one else in New York. It seems important now, I know, but——"

"Ward, I've made up my mind. I don't think he's particularly wonderful in lots of ways, but he's the man I want, and I'm going to marry him if he'll only ask me. But not for a long time."

"But in the years aren't you afraid you'll lose him?"

"Yes, I am, horribly afraid, but I'm not going to let myself be. I'm just going to love him, and he's going to love me. I believe in love like that, Ward."

It was a phrase to Nita, that belief. She had no faith in changeless love—only in her own successful destiny. But to Ward, sitting there on the sand with the violet luminous evening all about her, it was aching poignant reality. Her eyes on the harbor light at South Chicago flashing off and on, white and red, she was thinking—love is not like that; it burns a steady white light forever like the stars. She looked up into the fluctuating blues and purples of the heavens transuded with dewdrops of light—millions of stars; think

of it! stars burning steadily like millions of loves; happy loves; think of it; millions of ecstatic girls mating with their charming princes every day; it was wonderful, a world like that. When would her prince come? Was Rod——?

CHAPTER IX

I

AT BREAKFAST the next morning, Dizzy presented a small advertisement in a newspaper to her mother, which said that a representative of the Wharton School for Girls, Essex, Ohio, could be seen at the Hotel La Salle, daily. Nita and Ward rose to the occasion and urged her to go down town at once and meet the educator. After some telephoning an interview was arranged, and Dizzy, Ward and Mrs. Harris caught a mid-morning train.

The school would admit Dizzy to the Junior college with the understanding that if she were not able to keep up she was to drop back into the fourth year of preparatory work. And so it was settled immediately that Dizzy was to spend her next year at boarding school.

She hugged Ward impulsively.

"I haven't seen Dizzy so happy since she was a little girl," said Ward.

"I'm never happy," said Dizzy shortly. "I'm too busy to be happy or unhappy. I'm not an emotional young female."

"Oh, Elizabeth," said Mrs. Harris, "I dislike that word so!"

"Well, then, be glad I'm not one," said Dizzy.

II

There was shopping to be done. It was nearly six when they finally left the train at the Lakeshore station and began the walk home.

"I hope Olive hasn't messed up dinner too much," said Ward. "She hardly ever gets anything right. I'm afraid I should have come home early."

But inside the house there was no sign of dinner, no sign of Olive. Ward found her thrown across the bed in her room, sobbing noisily into the pillows.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Oh, gee. Miss Ward, oh, gee," was all Olive was able to articulate at first; but it became clear after a few moments that her man's leg was broken and he was lying in a hospital.

"But you knew this before, Olive. You were telling me this morning that as soon as he came out you were going to be married."

"Oh, my, don't speak of it," said Olive, her face convulsed with pain at the thought. "We was going to be married. But we can't be now. You see he's a teamster and the company he works for is going to give him a pension——"

"But that's nice," said Ward, trying to be encouraging."

"Oh, my, oh, my, and now he's got the pension his wife won't divorce him——"

"Oh, but Olive, is he married?"

"Oh, yes. He's married, but he was going to get a divorce and marry me, but his wife's a Catholic and she don't believe in divorce now that he's got his pension. He called me up from the hospital to say he's got to go back to her——"

Ward hurried out to tell the news to Dizzy and her mother. Then she went down to get dinner, while Mrs. Harris went to administer comfort to Olive. Nita coming in was regaled with the story of Olive's tragedy, but Sari didn't appear.

"I wish she'd come," murmured Dizzy. "I'm too hungry to wait dinner for her. I think she might telephone if she's staying down to the theater or anything."

They sat down to dinner without her. Suddenly in the midst of a discussion about Dizzy's future Nita exclaimed dramatically, "This is the first of August."

"It is, isn't it," said Ward. "Oh, dear, I wonder what the child is up to?"

"What was she always saying about the first of August?" asked Mrs. Harris nervously. "She's never stayed out like this before."

"Oh, she'll be in later," said Ward, with a compassionate glance at her mother's worn face.

"She should have telephoned," fumed Dizzy.

The telephone rang. Three of them jumped to answer it.

"It's only Rod," said Ward. "The boys have got hold of a car, and they want to know if you and I and Sari want to run down to Campus Gardens?"

"Do go," said Mrs. Harris. "Sari will be home by the time they get here, I am sure. I expect her any moment now."

III

But when Bill Wicker drove up at nine o'clock only two girls were prepared to join the party.

"Where's Sari?" demanded Wicker, who still anticipated a conquest.

"Why she hasn't come home from the studio yet, the little wretch. Mother is horribly worried. I think she's gone to the theater with some of the girls from the studio——"

"Too bad," said Wicker, perfunctorily. "Well, we'll have to get another girl if we are going to dance. Your young sister wouldn't come, I suppose?"

"Oh, mother wouldn't hear of it," said Ward, hastily. "She's only sixteen. Let's get Mary."

"Well!" Wicker puckered his lips and twisted them about in his face thoughtfully, and rejected Mary with the carelessness of a man turning over a page. "She calls me Mr. Wicker, and treats me like I'm a real grown-up man."

"——or Helene?" went on Ward.

"Well," Wicker still hesitated, sighed and ejaculated a feeble "all right."

To the relief of Ward and Anita, who remembered Mrs. Partridge's judgment of little Bill Wicker, Helene was alone. She felt a mysterious and naughty interest in Wicker and so accepted gladly and uniquely, for impromptu invitations were not favorites with her. Her innate disquiet about her appearance prevented her from being happy at a party unless she had had a day or more to prepare her clothes, her complexion, her hair for the event.

In the car, running smoothly between the ribbons of boulevard lights, the six happy people divided mystically into three happy couples. Ward and Rod were alone, their thoughts racing neck and neck, merging, dividing again to run in parallel grooves, leaping to thrilling adventures at the meeting of eyes, melting and moulding together at a secret hand clasp.

And Nita and Howard, together on the back seat,

had the same intimate sense of traveling along endlessly, side by side.

Helene's thoughts also took on a poetry, tinged with the romance of the summer sky, and the curly-headed boy beside her. A poetry slightly marred by the ridiculous, even in her thoughts, since he was five or six years younger than she. What Mr. Wicker's thoughts were may be speculated on by no one who has not the perspicuity of that entertaining psychologist, Mr. Briggs, who tells with equal ease about what a two-months-old infant or a poker chip thinks.

IV

The car pulled up at Campus Gardens, a resort on the Midway in vogue among those undergraduates of the University who had determined to spend their four years there with the minimum amount of intellectual strain.

"Horribly overcrowded with Jews," muttered Bill, as he followed the waiter to a table. "But then, every place is. Wonder where they all come from?"

They took their place in the center of a swarm of dark-eyed, gay, brilliantly dressed orientals—of that class of Semitics who habitually use the big restaurants and summer gardens as training schools in the social arts. Jews, in the economic ascendent phase, learning to alter their habits. Jews conscientiously low-voiced, airing superlative outer refinements ostentatiously, rising elaborately for their women, greeting acquaintances with a formality ascribed by the movies to the British aristocracy. Strident, ultra-smart Jews, dressed like actors in a society drama, swaggering, asserting their lordship of such places. And Jewish maidens. Beautiful, ugly, shrinking, brazen, aggres-

sively racial-looking ones, and here and there, one indistinguishable from a gentile; all expensively dressed, with shoes, wraps, hats, gloves in the very height of the mode. Ease, conspicuous ease, the one thing they all held in common.

Large cement spaces lay open for dancing. Rod and Ward, Nita and Howard joined the dancers, glad of each other's arms. Bill Wicker and Helene became acutely self-conscious in the network of expert dancers which scraped them on all sides. To them the music blared hideously, endlessly. The night stifled them, as inwardly cursing each other's skill they tripped over each other's feet and went doggedly on and on.

The music ended. Wicker clapped with the others, hoping the orchestra would not give them more. But the lazy strains resumed, and Helene and Wicker, out of all harmony, tried again.

When they returned to their table, Bill hastily engaged Ward for the next dance, while Rod sat rather sulkily and said nothing during the intermission. He was at a stage in his affair with Ward where he was ready to regard this innocent act of Bill Wicker's as a searing personal injury.

Ward and her curly-headed partner glided through the next dance rhythmically. He whispered that he loved to see her wearing blue, it suited her so well, to which Ward languidly replied, "Really? I thought you told me that nothing but green set me off properly."

"You wear any color, of course," said Bill Wicker, a little slowly, sending a hurry call through his brain to find the incident of his working his "line" on Ward. He was so dull-witted as to fail to guess that to appear in character before one of the Harris girls was

to appear thus before them all. He leaned back from the waist, and beamed meaningfully into her eyes. She threw him a bored look, which he misinterpreted.

Rod and Helene did not dance, as Helene was quite too exhausted to essay the floor again so soon. Rod talked at random his thoughts on Ward. She had gone off gayly with Bill. Not even a last glance for him. Playing with him, she was. He would show her.

This resolution was extremely feeble and short-lived, born of a desire of monopoly rather than actual jealousy. But for a few moments, to Ward's amusement, he devoted himself unreservedly to Helene, who began to entertain exciting thoughts of actually taking a man away from Ward.

V

Rod got up to dance with Helene. Ward and Wicker sailed off together once more. Nita and Howard looked at each other through a delicate vari-colored gauze of emotion.

"I hope I'm not keeping you from dancing," said Anita, with quite subconscious if trite attempt to draw him on.

Howard's ardent young gaze penetrated deeper into hers.

"I'd rather sit here and talk to you than do anything else in the world," he told her.

It was a beautiful moment to both of them. The music, the lights, the soft summer air—all were just right. Nita gazed absorbedly back into his face.

"That's the first compliment you've ever paid me," she said. Then her absorption in him came into her consciousness, making her warm all over. She felt

self-conscious, but held to her poise. "And—I'm getting all red about it, too," she went on humorously.

They both laughed, but behind Howard's laugh there was the satisfaction of the intense, sincere compliment he felt the remark to be. His gaze held hers with something of a challenge.

VI

The music stopped abruptly. An agile young man had climbed off the platform up on the roof of the band-stand stage. Clad in white so that he could be seen, silhouetted against the night sky, he pranced along the roof. Along the walls of the building lining the enclosed gardens he ran, stepping lightly to the roof toward the front which enclosed the winter garden of the establishment, where he executed a little dance, and was joined by an equally fearless young woman. Perilously they dodged in and out, lost to sight behind chimneys for some moments only to reappear to caper more. Suddenly the man seized her in his arms and swung her round with her body at right angles to his. As they were spinning the third time he apparently lost his grip and her body went skimming through the air and landed with a soft thud on the pavement.

A long drawn shivering "o-oh" went through the crowd, and the dance music started up as everyone realized that a dummy had been thrown and it was all part of the show.

VII

It was after midnight when the car pulled up at the Harris door, but the lights in the house were still burning brightly.

"Wonder what time Sari got in," murmured Ward, sleepily, as they left the boys.

Mrs. Harris, her head on the table, was being futilely comforted by a harassed Dizzie.

"Sari telephoned," explained Dizzy. "She's left home, the young idiot. The Wilson dancers opened at the North Shore Hotel tonight and she's gone with them. She's got a room on the north side and wouldn't tell us where——"

"But——"

"I would have gone right out there. Oh, what will become of my poor little girl," Mrs. Harris interrupted, hysterically. "But she telephoned too late. She waited until the performance was over."

"Canny youngster," said Dizzy, with almost a touch of admiration in her tone. "Never mind, mother, we'll get her tomorrow and bring her back."

"She was heartless, absolutely heartless," said Mrs. Harris, between sobs. "She wouldn't give me the slightest satisfaction."

"She promised to meet you tomorrow, though, mother," said Dizzy.

"Yes, she said that if I would come down to the Palmer House at four that she would talk to me, but she refused to divulge her address. Think of me having to meet my own little daughter in a hotel." She dissolved in sobs once more.

"Well, that's better than a grocery store, isn't it?" said Nita. "Come mother, don't worry about it. It will all come right in the morning. She can't stay away over a night or two."

"On the stage," whispered Mrs. Harris, staring past the book-case at horrors seen only by herself, and shuddering. "My little Sarah on the stage! What would her father say?"

"Well, her father would say, 'what of it?'" said Dizzy, who disliked having her mother's opinions, which she considered unintelligent, put in her father's mouth. "You don't think father would have been misled by all this twaddle about the vice of the theater, do you?"

"None of my children understand me," wailed Mrs. Harris.

"Poor mother," said Ward.

"——except Ward," said Mrs. Harris. "She loves her mother!"

CHAPTER X

I

SARI stood in a corner of the crimson parlor of the Palmer House with her feet unobtrusively held in fifth position. She secretly hoped that some keen-eyed, sophisticated person would know she was a dancer, but none of the languid loungers in the room appeared intelligent enough to notice.

Her mother was late. Her heart was beating. Would she after all have the courage? Yes, all she had to do was remember that her mother's fireworks were all humbug and she could eliminate in one swoop her family, Lakeshore, and all the annoyances that went with them.

"There is nothing the least bit subtle about mother," she thought, as she relaxed in a red plush chair. "She doesn't realize that I perhaps understand and know things. Everything must be explained to me, she thinks. I must be on my guard to be polite to her. But heavens, when she takes a key sentence and develops it in all her arguments, it's irritating." She was addressing an imaginary chum, a vague man. "Nothing can induce her to stop talking long after I've understood what she wants to say. She repeats horribly, using all five or four or whatever it is forms of development of a paragraph. And of course she'll reproach me for not letting her know about it. As if she would have considered letting me go, if I had even hinted to her. Well, I did hint."

She saw her mother coming, worn-looking, anxious,

sweet. Something tugged at her heart. Her expression hardened.

"Sarah!" Her mother kissed her, in a stillicide of emotion.

Sari smiled weakly, in an effort to carry off the scene with a high hand, but her mother's batteries were too strong for her. She collapsed into a big chair, and began kicking her heels sulkily like an indignant baby.

"Dear, dear little Sarah, don't you love your home?" Mrs. Harris began. She had been thinking all night long, and had decided to appeal to Sari's love for her. She might have succeeded except that the phrasing reminded Sari of a story she had heard when she was twelve years old: a salvation army captain on a sinking ship, approaching a Frenchman, asks, "My friend, don't you love Jesus?" "Oh, yes," exclaims the Frenchman, enthusiastically, "Not dese great beeg English cheeses, but de nize Camembert—" She laughed. Her mother looked hurt and shocked and Sari recovered her position.

"Of course I love my home, mother," said Sari, "but I can't stay there all my life."

"Not stay in your home all your life? What is a home for? Don't you intend to ever have a home of your own?"

They were bickering. Sari sailed competently ahead.

"I don't know. I'm going to work first and live my own life—"

"But on the stage—"

"See, you wouldn't want me to go on the stage, and so surely, since I have chosen the stage I ought to leave home."

"But you are so young to choose."

"I should have been on two years ago. I am not young—"

"Oh, you're a baby, a pitiful little baby. You shan't be away from home. If you must try the stage, try it, but stay at home, don't live off among strangers—"

"I can't stay at home. The trip is too long. Why, I shouldn't be able to get the last train, and that means I would have to come all the way on the cars. It would take me hours! I shouldn't get home before three or four in the morning."

"Oh, I would come with you. We could use a cab. Sari, you mustn't think of it, you must come home."

"Yes, and have you begging me night and day to give up dancing. No mother, once and for all I've broken away and I'm not coming back. I hate homes, anyway."

"The home is the hotbed of character, dear. It must make the conditions right for the preparation of each tender plant that later must take its chances under God's open sky. The time has not yet come for you. You are so young. I don't want to force your development, nor to retard it, nor yet to pervert it. I am not trying to make a fuchsia out of a geranium—if you really feel that you must go on the stage, it will all come in good time. But on the other hand, the best gardener must do more than protect the species. He must perfect species."

"Mother, I am not a little plant," said Sari, impatiently. "And as for your pruning me and fostering me, why it's simply ridiculous. You are no more interested in me as an individual than I am in you. If you weren't my mother you wouldn't feel the slightest interest in me. I'm a little wild flower in the garden."

Tears had gathered in her mother's eyes. "Wild

things are pretty, dear, but we can't live wild. I know you don't care for me a bit, but I care for you——”

“Oh, mother, for heaven's sake, of course I care for you. I said that I wasn't interested in you as an individual. Why should I be? We have no interests in common. We are different ages. I love you, but I can't live in the same house with you. I am careless, even lazy at times, two qualities that you despise: I am moody, a fact that you know and never comprehend. Some of the plans you have for me make me open my eyes. You no more understand me—and the advice you give me!” Sari cast up her eyes and shrugged Frenchily.

“But Sari, your own mother! Can't you take advice from your own mother?”

“Why should your advice be so much more valuable because you are my mother? Supposing that Helene Partridge did this, and that her mother advised her to leave home. Would you expect her to take her mother's advice if she gave what you considered bad advice?”

“Mrs. Partridge would never advise such a thing. Besides——”

“But supposing she did?”

“But Helene is ten years older than you.”

“Well, supposing she were my age. Now, listen, mother, and get this between the eyes. Answer honestly. Supposing that Helene were my age, and exactly in my circumstances, and supposing that her mother, your best friend, did advise her to go on doing as I am doing! Now don't say that she couldn't be my age, or in my circumstances or that her mother wouldn't advise her. I'm asking a hypothetical question. By hypothesis, she's my age, and Mrs. Part-

ridge advised her to go on just as I'm doing. Now! Should she take her mother's advice or not?"

"Oh, Sari, don't be silly. Come home with mother."

"Answer my question. Remember the circumstances are the same. Should she obey her mother, giving advice that you consider wrong or should she go home as you want me to do?"

"If her circumstances were the same, she should go home with her mother. Sari, let's not waste time——"

"Then, you admit yourself that if a mother advises a daughter wrongly, a daughter should use her own judgment? Just the fact that a woman is a mother doesn't give her the wisdom of Solomon. If you weren't my mother you wouldn't dream of forcing an opinion on me as to what is best for me."

"Oh, Sari, a mother always knows what is best for her own daughter."

"How?"

This question brought Mrs. Harris up emotionally, as a sharp pull on a bridle will bring a horse to a stop. She sputtered for a moment, and then lost herself in tears. "How? Why—why-wh-wh—she just knows! Oh, what shall I do? My baby!"

Sari sighed. After a moment she began her argument again.

"But, don't you see, mother, if you were somebody else's mother——"

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Sari, stop reiterating that if I were some one else's mother. I'm not! I'm your mother, even though you are not satisfied with me, the fact is there."

"I am satisfied with you," said Sari, in an injured tone. "I think a lot of you."

"Then come home if you care anything for me. This will kill me."

"Oh, mother, you're so silly. You know it won't kill you. It won't even affect your life much. It doesn't even have to make you unhappy unless you let it."

"What will Mrs. Partridge say, and Mrs. Field, and everybody?"

"What do I care what they will say. You have too much of an opinion of what a lot of addlepated old frumps think. What does it matter?"

"The addlepated old frumps are my friends."

"But it does matter to me whether I go back or not. It matters a lot. I won't go back and be unhappy and quarrel with the girls and have Ward vamping all the men, and Dizzy making fun of every opinion I have, and everything so dull, and all the old women in the place, shaking their heads, gossiping, acting as if they had never seen a girl's leg when the dresses get short, and scolding about extremes and dust when they get long. Worth-while men hate to come way out there in the country, anyway."

"Sari, I'll take an apartment nearer town in the fall, if you like, in Kenwood, or on the near North Side—"

"Oh, mother, I want to live by myself—"

II

They quarreled for about an hour till both were white and worn.

"I will never get over it, if you leave your home!"

"Oh, yes, you will, and that's more than you'll do, if I go back now. I never will hear the last of it then. I've burned my bridges and I'm not going to re-build them. So goodbye, I'm going now, there's no use in

prolonging this moment any more. Goodbye!" She kissed her mother and whirled away—

"But you haven't told me where you are? I must go with you and find out—"

"Now, mother, listen," said Sari, sharply. "If you follow me and try to find out where I am and all about me, I will go to New York and not let you know a thing about me. I am all right. As it is, I will call you up every day, and let one of the girls come and visit me for a day in a week or so, maybe Ward. Just now, I can't bear to have anyone come and see me. I'm in a perfectly comfortable, perfectly decent place—"

"Sari, dear, but why can't I come and see where?"

"Oh, you can, sometime, but just now I'm sick of all this bickering and I'm not going to have you fussing over the plumbing and the air and the light, and heavens knows what. I want to be free. I want to be by myself, and how can I be, if you and the girls are dropping in on me every other day?"

"If you'd let Nita or Ward come and stay with you?"

"There! What did I say? The first thing you want to do is spoil everything for me. I want to be alone, and away from my family. I've seen them all my life and I want to see what it's like to live without them."

"Sari, you are a cruel heartless girl, and when you have a daughter of your own you will see. And all I hope is that you never suffer what I am suffering."

"Mother, I really must go. It's a farce, really. You have three other daughters—"

"But I need you."

"What for? I only create discord. It is better for

me to take myself off. This is the most painless way. You are all happier."

"If I had only known. Why didn't you tell me that you were discontented and unhappy at home. There is nothing I wouldn't do for any one of you."

"Oh, I did tell you. All the girls are selfish and absorbed in their own affairs. No one at home understands me——"

"And you think you will find some one outside the home to understand you?"

"I need no one. I understand myself. I can be happy alone, but I cannot be happy in the bosom of my family. I know that sounds cold-blooded, but I am eighteen. I have a right to life and a chance to stand alone. I need to get out in the world for my own development. I am earning forty dollars a week, and that is enough for any one to live on!"

"Money! I'm not worried about money. I can let you have some, if you wish. It's the thought of my little daughter alone in a big city, full of strangers."

"Mother, darling, I really must go. You make me laugh. Go back and pull that before the Lakeshore Woman's Club, they will appreciate it."

This time she turned and ran, leaving her mother weeping on a gaudy red plush chair.

"And to think I spent my honeymoon here," said Mrs. Harris to herself and began a long, luxurious, emotional debauch.

III

When Mrs. Harris brought the news home Ward wept. Drawing close to her mother, she consoled her in every way she could; imagining reasons of a high and noble nature to excuse Sari. Nita, slightly annoyed because of the upset to the household, spoke of

it only when Ward or her mother tended to give it a tragical dignity; then she called it a schoolgirl escapade.

Mrs. Harris wondered what people were saying. Not that it mattered to her now, she said, laying great stress on the last word.

"Do you mind if I talk to you, Ward?"

"Of course not, mother, dear. What is it?"

"Do you remember the little blue apron Sari wore to school the first day she ever went?"

"The one with the white organdy strings?"

"Yes . . . I have . . . I have got that dress yet. It's at the bottom of the big brown trunk in the attic . . ." There was a pause. Then Mrs. Harris broke down. "I don't think I can stand it."

Nita interrupted:

"Now mother, stop fretting about Sari. There's no use—"

"Fretting! . . . When my little girl has gone from me?"

"Well, look at it reasonably. It's a great bore, of course, but there is no great harm done. Let her get a taste of it. She'll come home all right. The thing now is to put a face on it for the neighbors. Let them know that you approve."

"Yes, I must do that," said Mrs. Harris. "Oh, what a position she has put me in. I shall have to pretend to sanction stage life. And then the horrible temptations—"

"Nonsense. Stage life isn't as bad as you think, mother."

"My child, you know nothing of life."

"Mother dear," said Ward. "I think perhaps times have changed. Even the nicest girls go on the stage now. The daughter of Professor Handbook is in the

same bunch with Sari, I think. You remember Professor and Mrs. Handbook at the University."

"Dear, dear. Poor Doctor Handbook and Mrs. Handbook certainly have my sympathy!"

Tears rose like bubbles on boiling water.

"No one thinks a thing about it, mother dear. You can tell Mrs. Partridge and all the rest of them that you approve Sari's actions. And that in these days a girl has a right to develop herself."

"Yes, but on the stage! Why couldn't she have gone to the normal college and become a teacher like Drusilla Drudan if she wanted to develop herself?"

"Oh, mother, can you imagine any of us teaching school?"

"I don't see why not. It's certainly respectable enough. I wish I had been stricter with all of you. Oh, why did I ever consent to her studying dancing at all. Why? Why? Why?"

"Well, it's done now, mother," said Anita. "Sari is a silly little idiot, of course, but there is no helping that. It is cruel of her not to let us know where she is, however. We'll have to tell people that we do know."

"I'm not going to stand it; I'm going to do something!" Mrs. Harris looked ahead of her with determination in dizzy circles singing around her head.

"Good for you, mother," called Dizzy from the porch. "Why don't you go up there with the police and stop the performance?"

"Elizabeth! I could never create a scandal like that!"

"No, of course not. Now let's be reasonable and stop fussing, all of us. This experience may do Sari some good. She's simply chuck full of silly ideas. I say, let her alone. Don't cause a scandal we'll all be

sorry for. Just smile and tell the truth about her to people. No one will ask for her address, anyway. It isn't as if everyone didn't know all about Sari. If she chooses to go on the north side under the chaperonage of Carlotta Wilson and her mother——”

“Does her mother chaperon the girls?”

“Certainly. Carlotta Wilson never goes anywhere without her mother. And the girls in the group will all be well taken care of. You can count on that. And then Barbara Handbook being in the bunch, too, makes it really quite all right. Good heavens! It's not like the stage, anyway. It's more of a lark than anything else. It's only appearing at a hotel.”

“It's a public appearance for money,” said Mrs. Harris, but her voice was several degrees more cheerful. She went out on the porch to reproach Dizzy for having suggested the police.

“She's taking her medicine,” said Ward. “But the way she does it scares me. She just tiptoes around the house as if there was a funeral. And the way she smiles and tries to be cheerful is enough to break your heart.”

“Ward, you always have been hoodwinked terribly by mother.”

IV.

Among the clans of Lakeshore intense inward gladness shone, as the news was squirted about that Sari Harris had actually gone on the stage.

Though every girl in Lakeshore who heard the news was secretly discontented and unhappy under her mother's domination, there was not one who did not feel a new spurt of self-respect at her own heroism in staying at home.

But if the daughters inwardly rejoiced, the mothers openly told how glad they were that their own daughters were not fools, and pitied poor dear Mrs. Harris, who was such a wonderful mother, and who had such a marvelous spirit.

CHAPTER XI

I

THE SUMMER routine went on as usual. Nita and Ward swam and danced and walked and played tennis in their leisure hours with Howard and Rod. Dizzy studied. Mrs. Harris attended to her neighborhood activities. Sari telephoned every day, but refused to disclose the location of her room.

August slipped by, and Nita prepared for New York, and Dizzy for boarding school. They were to take the same train east. Dizzy had to go early for her examinations, and so they were planning to leave the first week in September.

Shopping and sewing for them occupied the days of Ward and her mother, whose constant refrain was, "I don't know what we're going to do without you girls," and "the place won't be the same." Nita listened politely, Dizzy abstractedly, both equally bored, both murmuring meaningless phrases in return. Ward and Mrs. Harris talked of nothing else.

II

One Sunday afternoon late in August, Ward came to Nita, reading in the porch swing. She was agitated, almost unpoised. She fidgeted.

"Nita, dear."

"Yes."

"There's something I've been wanting to talk to you about. You see I don't quite know what to think—

what to do—in a way it seems as if I ought not to let anyone know Rod's feelings—and yet—and yet—I'm so worried. I must have advice."

The story came fluently enough with frequent sympathetic interjections from Nita.

"We were out walking, and I noticed a peculiar expression on his face when I suggested that we go and sit on the pier. I thought perhaps he might be intending to try to kiss me, and I didn't like it very well—I mean, lately he has kept trying and trying to do different things like that.

"But—there was a silence. He had been telling about his work in the steel mills—the grubby job he is holding now promises something in the future. But he could go home and run his father's store in that horrid little town he comes from, and be a high monkey-monk. Suddenly he said in his regular voice as if he were talking about the weather: 'It makes it doubly hard to decide, Ward, because you see, I love you and I want you——'"

"My dear!"

"Yes, he did, he said it just like that. I don't know what else he said. He started to rave. I was stunned, positively stunned. I never thought of such a plain sudden blurting out like that——"

"How positively thrilling. I wish Howard——"

"It sort of thrills me now to think of it. But at the time I could only stroke his hand and say nothing. I could only sit and wonder because none of his ravings seemed to touch me. It seemed so unreal, so impossible."

"Oh, but Ward, you've had so many boys crazy about you. I should think that——"

"But none of them were ever like this. They were all just boys and I knew they would get over it, but

with Rod it's different. It's serious. Once, right after I first met him I had the strongest feeling that I'd better stop seeing him. That I was going to hurt him horribly. A voice seemed to say to me, 'you'd better let that man alone.' "

"How interesting and weird. But don't you think you'll marry him? Honestly Ward, I think he's great. I don't see what more you could want. And then, too, he seems to be your type of man."

"I do like him, Nita, I like him a lot. I like him and respect him so much that I hate to hurt him. But about love, I don't know. I don't love him. I don't love anybody. At times he thrills me almost unbearably. And I don't know—he seems to be clean and honorable and strong all right—like the little Colonel's father said her husband must be—"

"I think that was wonderful that silver yardstick business in the 'Little Colonel'" said Nita. "I always think of that myself. I think Howard measures up, all right, don't you?"

"Oh yes! Yes, indeed. Rod said to me at the last, 'You see, dear, I trust you completely. I have placed myself in your power.' Oh Rod, Rod, I'm so sorry for you. You see if he stays on here it's possible that he may work in at a certain mill in the east and get a chance to become a rich man. And if he goes now, it's just being a small-town person, and not amounting to much in the world. But if he stays here it's just going to keep on getting worse and worse until it gets to be part of him. He says it's part of him now."

"Don't you really think you will marry him?"

"I don't know. I'm to give him his answer tonight. I promised, but I can't somehow make up my mind. He told me that he was my slave, that he would do

exactly as I said; and think of the awful, frightful responsibility . . .”

“He might make you care, even if you don’t love him now!”

“Yes, that’s what I think. The truth is I want him to stay and play with me. I like to take hold of his hand because it gives me the feeling that we’re both so beautiful. It was wonderful last night in a way, the moonlight by the lake, and somehow there was the water so big and mysterious, giving out something warm and luminous, and the sky like a little house keeping us cozy and sheltered. . . .”

“You do love him!”

“I don’t know. I don’t know. If he were the right one, wouldn’t I know at once?”

“The prince? Mother’s prince. Do you believe in him?”

“Nita, I do. I do. Don’t you?”

“Yes.” In a way Nita did. She was not wholly untruthful.

“I must be wise. I must decide. Oh Nita, Nita, how can I be big enough and wise enough to decide?”

III

Rod had an armful of gladioli, the color of delicate coral. He followed Ward into the house self-consciously. His way, his air, his manner, his graceful body attitudes were not potent enough to conceal his hopeful embarrassment. Mrs. Harris cornered him and rendered him nearly imbecile by relating a long involved story. Ward, after she had arranged the flowers in a huge vase, took an armchair which domineered the room; a point of vantage which she occupied with sufficient demureness.

They got up and stumbled out finally. Rod had the impression that Mrs. Harris was still going on and on as they left. They walked to the beach without exchanging a word.

He caught her arm. "Oh, Ward, you are so silent! It makes me afraid, it makes me afraid!"

The timbre of his voice plunged and somersaulted through her as if she were liquid. She turned her warm, astonished, imploring eyes up to him in a short look that made him faint. An impetus at once terrifying and exhilarating merged them. A kiss. A long breath died in words and phrases of endearments, and Ward was transcended to a cloud touched with the gold and pink of sunset. In the warm radiance of a new-found emotion she could no longer feel her body.

They separated and without touching dropped down side by side on the small stones at the water's edge. Silently they stared into what seemed like the world's end, the black nothing of night and water.

"That was rather sudden." His strain to be matter of fact gave his voice an edge of desperation. "Oh Ward, you're so wonderful. You're—." He drew her close again.

A dazed sense of diffusion had been taking possession of her. In his arms she sank safely again to golden reality.

"I didn't think it would be like that."

"Why, darling?"

"I'm so surprised. I feel strange. You see I've never kissed any one before."

"You're so marvelous, so unlike other girls—a girl in an old old story—"

"Never, never before, and I didn't think I ever would."

"Would what, dearest?" Soft as the caressing

waters on the smooth sands his lips touched her hair, her face, her neck. "Sweet, sweet sweetheart, what?" "Kiss anybody."

"Not even me?" He was already fatuously assured. "Didn't you think that some day you'd meet somebody like me, didn't you?"

"Yes, but I never thought I'd kiss him. Anyway not just at first. I sort of thought he'd kiss me, and now I've—"

"Do it again."

And the rainbow moments slipped by, merging and changing like a sunset until they were a steady golden glow of remembrance.

IV

Rumors of various disagreeable sorts floated around the neighborhood about Sari. Mr. William Wicker in calling on Mary Field one night told the story of his meeting with Sari on the beach in the dark. Said Mary to Nita:

"You know I've always felt—I don't want to say anything about your sister, Nita dear, because I think as much of Sari as anyone. But you know she did get books out of the library by De Maupassant, that awful French writer, and read them. You know, there's no harm in that sort of thing, really. I'm awfully broad-minded about it. But I do feel that my own mind is much *purer* than Sari's on that account, and then the other night Mr. Wicker said a few things that made me think Sari really had been careless."

"What did he say?"

"Well, nothing much, only that I think a girl has to be awfully careful or a man will think she isn't quite

womanly. I think she has given Mr. Wicker that impression. Of course I told him that Sari—”

“Mary, I’ll tell you something. Whatever Bill Wicker said about my sister is not true. It’s nothing but spite. He has fairly pursued Sari with invitations. He has begged her time and time again to let him come over. I know that. Why Sari would no more waste a moment’s time on him than—”

Nita was rarely so untactful as to hint that a man whom Mary had allowed to come and see her was not welcome at the Harris home. But she was thoroughly angry. An attack on her clan was an indirect attack on herself. They parted rather coolly soon afterward and Nita hastened home to tell Ward about it.

Ward, more moved than Nita, clenched her fists and said that if she were a man she would shoot Wicker. Her inner nature, laid bare by the new consciousness of herself as the heroine of what she called the oldest story in the world, was exposed to the darts of all emotions. Anger took possession of her readily —she was eager for a plot to unfold that she might thwart the villain since she had already won the hero. Since Rod’s kiss the night before she had been tip toe on the summit of all the emotions she had ever dreamed. And now she felt herself to be supremely the master, not only of her own destiny, but of all young girls. A melodramatic conversation with herself—she would take Wicker away from those foolish girls he was playing about with, and make him fall in love with her. Then she would laugh at him and scorn him and send him away broken—sent her to the telephone. She invited him to call that night.

He came. The little living room back of the drawing room, seemed to shrink under the expansion of his conceit. He made love to Ward in his usual desultory

way, but he did not get caught. He was too canny, his emotions were too fishlike for him to fall overwhelmingly as Ward had hoped.

It was the day after she had kissed Rod.

"By the way, Rod left for the east tonight," said Wicker.

"The east?"

"Yeah. A telegram came and he dashed his clothes in a bag and beat it."

"You mean he went home?"

"I dunno. He didn't confide in me. Guess he didn't care so much about having you call me up."

A sharp pang struck through her. That Rod would resent Bill Wicker's call had not occurred to her. Surely, surely he had understood. The prince of the love legend always understood everything. It was impossible for her to believe that he had left without seeing her.

"You mean he is going away. He hasn't gone yet?"

"I mean he's gone. I saw him hop in the taxi myself. He took the train at South Chicago. I heard him calling on the telephone."

"Oh, but he's coming back, isn't he. Perhaps the steel company sent him down to Gary on business or something."

Wicker snorted. "Say! You must think he's president of the company. Let me tell you he's no Judge Gary. That job he's got doesn't throw him into a slew of important conferences."

Ward put a loud record on the victrola to silence Wicker so she could think. What did it mean? A telegram, a hasty departure, and no message. Perhaps he had tried to telephone and the line was busy. Then why didn't he just come over? Perhaps he didn't have time. Oh, he could have found time. Was

he angry because she had called up Bill? If that was so he had no right to be angry. He ought to trust her. But—but—her mind was in a disorder of surprise and conjecture, and the weighted ache in her breast grew heavier to carry every minute.

V

Nita's affair just escaped a successful climax.

Toward the last of the summer she saw Howard every night, talked to him, listened to his views on love, marriage, and other emotions and institutions. They discussed ideas impersonally, as if neither had a direct interest in the other's future. They planned their own home without admitting to each other that they were thinking of living in it together. Howard had very definite notions about everything pertaining to matrimony, from the position his wife would hold in the family to the location of the ice-box in the kitchen. He told Nita all these things, but never proposed to her.

He left for the west three days before Nita was to depart for New York. As he took a midnight train, he ordered a taxi to come to the Harris home at eleven-fifteen. They spent their last evening together walking by the lake, talking vaguely of their future, exchanging shy compliments. At eleven they came back to the house and sat down on the porch. Howard's bags were piled in one corner.

"I sure have seen a lot of you this summer."

"Wonder when we'll meet again?" A heavy feeling was beginning in Nita's breast. She had thought he would surely propose on this last night. "Probably never."

"Oh yes, we will. We'll meet again, all right."

"When we're old. Won't it be funny."

A cab turned the corner and stopped in front of the house.

"There's my taxi. Say, Nita I've got to go. Say listen, don't you worry about our not seeing each other again. We will alright. And it won't be long. Listen, you'll write lots."

His eyes were eager and shining. If he would only say something about marriage. She felt herself to be hanging her whole personality about his neck. He couldn't go.

He came close and looked down at her in silence.

"Goodbye," he said in a choked voice. He was going to kiss her. She didn't move. He bent. The taxi gave a snort. He started, dropped his kiss on the end of her nose, stumbled over his bags, knocked his hat off over the banister, cursed silently to himself, picked up his bags, recovered his hat, and trudged up the walk to his taxi.

"Goodbye," called Nita.

"Goodbye. Say, Nita, you'll have a lot of patience, won't you?"

"Yes."

The taxi chugged off.

VI

Mrs. Partridge and Helene, Mrs. de Remy and little Paul, Mrs. Field and Mary, were to assist the Harris family in seeing Nita and Dizzy safely off for the east.

Sari telephoned and promised to come and see them off too. So they were looking forward to seeing her.

And when they had almost given her up she came

rushing into the station attended by a very beautiful Jewish boy of about her own age.

There was just time to kiss Nita and Dizzy when the train pulled out. Then Ward turned and hugged Sari.

"It's nice to see you. I'm almost glad you went away because seeing you now helps make up for losing Dizzy and Nita."

"Ward, you're a dear. I believe I have missed you. You're the only one, though."

"Mother. You must have missed mother!"

"Oh Ward, you darling stupid. Her, least of all. Here, I want to present Cecil to you." She called the dark-eyed youth and introduced him to her mother and Ward with an air of pride as Mr. Cecil De Jonghe.

"But Sari," said her mother in a nervous undertone, while Ward was talking to the boy, "isn't he Jewish?"

"Really, I don't think I've ever asked him," said Sari.

"Well, I hope he's not," said Mrs. Harris fervently. "How long have you known him?"

"Oh ages." Sari's manner took on a brilliant vagueness like the reflection of a star in a moving pool.

"Did you know him before you left home?"

"Well, not exactly!"

"Not exactly? I don't understand. You don't know a person exactly or inexactly. Either you did or you didn't know him, and if you didn't know him you must have met him since you left home, and so you can't have known him ages!"

For a moment Mrs. Harris' attention was distracted from the question by her admiration of her own logical reasoning. Before she could recapitulate, Mrs. Partridge, Mrs. de Remy and the rest of the horde

from Lakeshore swarmed in and took possession. Ward and Sari had only a moment for talk.

"Darling, you must come and see me in a couple of days. I've got the sweetest place! And loads to tell you."

"I'm crazy to. Sari, when can I come?"

"Don't bring mother, and you must promise not to give me away unless I let you, if I show you, but I am simply crazy to have a good long talk with you."

"I'll come any time, Sari, I can hardly wait."

"I'll call you up."

VII

Ward and her mother went sadly back to Lakeshore. All the way on the train Mrs. Harris talked of how strange the house would seem without so many girls. And over and over in Ward's thoughts ran the hopeful wish that she would find a message from Rod at home, a letter, a telegram, a telephone call.

But there was none. She walked through the empty rooms from which youth seemed to have fled. She was not going back to college that fall. She would sit at home waiting, waiting, while her mother in a hundred little ways would remind her of the love legend, unconscious that the hero of it had already come and gone.

BOOK TWO

SARI



CHAPTER I

I

THE quarters in which Sari had elected to set up her establishment consisted of the only "room with a bath" in a small rooming house. A muddy mustard colored building, hung on the outlying fringe of the business district which surrounded the loop, and particularly dingy in appearance, even for Clark street, it was necessarily called the Grand Central Hotel.

In order to penetrate to her apartment, Sari ascended three steps directly from the sidewalk, unlocked a door that stood at the right of the entrance to the office, went up a flight of stairs and turned to the right, where she could discover the knob of her door by feeling around in a very dark hallway.

Here, green and gold heavily bombarded her. Intended for the bridal chamber, an artful effort had been made by Mr. Cheez, the proprietor, to give the room the air of a parlor. There was a carpet of thick grayish green, lace curtains at the windows, and a solid-looking oak armchair. In spite of this, however, the bed bounded to the eye first, radiating its yellow into the green and gold scheme—a swell brass bed, as Mr. Cheez observed. And all along the green walls wriggling lines of thin gilt hung down like starved snakes.

An extension of the house telephone stood just outside of Sari's door. When anyone rang her up, an ear-splitting buzzing began at her door, impelled by the colored maid of the establishment, who answered

all calls. Sari then flung a kimona around herself, being nearly always in a state of undress, when she was so summoned, and ran into the hall where she conversed in as cryptic a manner as possible in order to thwart the colored maid, who always listened on the line.

The colored maid had a method peculiar to herself of reading hand-writing, so that Sari often had her mail confused with that of a person, who bore the name of Miss A. Austine Eisenstein. Mr. D. E. Prendergast, a stout amiable gentleman, conscientiously comic, was always getting letters which the colored maid slipped under Sari's door under the delusion that Prendergast looked like Harris.

Others who passed daily through the doors of the Grand Central Hotel were noted by Sari. There was a shoe clerk, true to type in his slim, dapper, suave beauty, and a fat bushy-browed worker in a mail-order house, one of those girls, so numerous among the working women in large cities, who having neither kith nor kin of their own, build from the people thrown about them a vicarious family whom they love, confide in, and make a convenience of.

But once inside her door with the bolt turned, Sari felt a new sense of absolute liberty. She would bounce up and down on the bed in her joy at being alone and undisturbed.

II

The Wilson dancers performed on a runway and stage leading out into Lake Michigan from the terraced dining room of a luxurious north side hotel.

Lake, sky, and sometimes the moon made an effective back drop in the radiance of a magnificent spotlight. Sari danced as easily and carelessly before the audience as she had done in the studio.

Opening night was given a frill of excitement by the advent of some reporters. At first the girls thought of themselves as great actresses besieged by the press. When the reporters asked for Barbara Handbook, who was making her debut as well as Sari, she observed languidly, with heavy ennui; "These newspaper men, I really haven't time to bother with them." But it developed that her father, the respectable professor from the University, had been arrested on a charge more than ordinarily racy and they wanted to get the story from her angle. The Wilson dancers were not mentioned in the account next day.

Sari enjoyed the rush, the make-up, the dressing-room atmosphere, even more than the performance itself. And most of all she liked the new sense of freedom, the feeling that she could be out as much and as long as she liked without accounting to a querulous mother.

Sari was completely happy. Every night she came home, opened the downstairs inner door with her latch key, and sped up the stairs to her room. Once inside she experienced the thrill of being all alone again. Sometimes she stopped at the Greek restaurant next door where she took her meals and had a supper before she went to bed. She was never lonely.

In the morning she was accustomed to get up about nine o'clock and walk through Lincoln park before breakfast. Occasionally she walked along the lake for half an hour or more before coming back to eat. Afternoons she went to the studio to practice.

III

One morning, when she had been enjoying this existence for a week, she walked further than usual in the shining silver sunlight. On Lake Shore drive she sat on the stone steps leading down to the lake's edge. Chin on her hands, elbows on knees staring into the blinding blue, she became aware that a young man had been walking by her several times. Her thoughts were on her salary. She was laying it out in parcels, making budgets.

When she looked at the watch on her wrist she saw that it was almost eleven o'clock. She had had nothing to eat. So, assuming a businesslike carriage she began to walk home hurriedly. But some sixth sense was urging her that there had been a young man in her picture for some time. She didn't know when she had first known that he was there. She looked over her shoulder involuntarily. Yes, there was some one back of her. Turning hastily down a side street, she walked on, but this time her thoughts would not go away from the young man. He was rather attractively dressed, she thought, but at that distance she could not see his face. He had on a bright tan overcoat, almost yellow, a black and white checked suit, and a fall hat of green pulled rakishly over one side of his face. Yes, on the whole his looks appealed to Sari. She decided to look around again.

He was still following. At her second glance back he hastened his footsteps and soon caught up with her, bared his head gallantly and remarked, that it was a lovely morning for a stroll.

"Don't you know you shouldn't speak to strange young women?" said Sari severely, glancing at him.

He was hardly older than Sari herself, with a clear olive skin, great dark eyes, and black curly hair that waved back from his forehead. When he removed his hat, Sari saw at once that he was Jewish.

"I couldn't help it," declared the young Jew gallantly. "I saw you on the beach, and I made up my mind that I must know you; have followed you from Lincoln park. I watched you sitting by the lake. I have written a poem about it—see?" He exhibited a bit of paper which Sari took and examined.

"I don't see how that's about me," she said, "but you have the cock-eyed artistic soul. I feel it. We are friends. Something impelled me to look around to you—just then. Some great force. My father was a writer. Perhaps I can help you!"

"If you only would," said the young man fervently. His abrupt phrases, vaguely foreign-sounding, were peppered with flagrant Americanisms, and his manner was intensely that of the college boy—a sharply outlined impersonation. "See, here is my card." He took out of his pocket a bit of pasteboard on which was engraved "Mr. Cecil H. De Jonghe." "Tell me all about yourself," he begged. "Are you a Chicago girl? Do you live here? I am anxious to know."

Here was an audience for a completely new role. Her manner became earnest—the serious young girl making her way in the world. She seized his arm and said with gusto:

"I am just going to have my breakfast. Will you come with me? I eat at a little Greek restaurant over at the other side of the park. I will tell you all about myself. But you must let me pay for my own cock-eyed meal. It is one of my principles never to let anyone pay for any of my meals. I am strictly independent."

Mr. De Jonghe promised reluctantly, dreading the

waiters. They found a little table, with the counter close by, behind which white-aproned Greeks passed and re-passed polishing glasses, bringing sandwiches and soups. He looked at Sari to begin the story of her life.

"The soup in here is awfully good," said Sari. "You'd better have some. This is Thursday, so they call it spaghetti soup. On Sunday it's chicken soup, on Monday barley, on Tuesday tomato, on Wednesday bean, on Thursday spaghetti, on Friday clam, on Saturday something else, I forget what, but it's all the same cock-eyed soup. You'd better try it."

Mr. De Jonghe tried it and Sari ordered an enormous breakfast with much energy. "Do you live all alone?" asked Mr. De Jonghe.

"Yes, I live all by myself in this great big city. I am strictly independent. I support myself, without any help from my people, who do not understand me. They wanted me to go to college and cram myself full of facts and vulgar knowledge, and had none of them the slightest conception of what art really meant to me. I made up my mind never to submit to them, and so I ran away from home."

She was forming her sentences like his, a trick of imitation she acquired easily.

"Poor little girl," said Mr. De Jonghe. "How brave of you!"

"Oh no, it wasn't brave," said Sari conscious that the denial made her case for bravery so much stronger. "I just felt that I had to go. My art was stronger than I, I left home and mother without the usual tears that sentimental girls shed on leaving home. I hope, Mr. De Jonghe, that you are not a sentimentalist."

Good heavens no, Mr. De Jonghe was not a sentimentalist. Being vague in his mind as to all this im-

plied, he replied quickly that he was a pianist, studying at a well known school on the North side but that he played every musical instrument that he had ever attempted with considerable ease.

"Isn't that wonderful," said Sari with enthusiasm.
"By ear?"

"Yes. Violin, piano, harp, cornet, banjo, ukelele—anything. I am studying the piano, now, though. My father, too, wanted me to go to college, but I could not see the use as I was anxious to begin to study the piano. So I came to Chicago—"

"Where is your home?"

"In St. Louis. I left my many friends there. What wonderful times we used to have—" a short retrospect seemed to float before Mr. De Jonghe. He sighed. Then came back to Sari's affairs. "But didn't your mother dislike it, when you told her you were leaving her?"

"She couldn't stop me," Sari replied. "Something sustained me. The thought that my career was the thing that I was meant for made me strong enough to stand against her."

"What are you studying?" asked Mr. De Jonghe.

The question came as something of a shock, a good bit of disappointment to Sari. She had been secretly hoping that Mr. De Jonghe would tell her that he had seen her dance and had recognized her.. The thought that she had been existing in his mind as a mere student for nearly half an hour annoyed her exceedingly.

"Studying! I am appearing with the Carlotta Wilson dancers. You may have heard of them!"

Mr. De Jonghe had heard of them. Good heavens, an actress, a dancer sat across the table from him. He trembled. He could hardly bear to confess that he had never seen them, but hastily mentioned that he had

seen every show in the Loop, and had looked on Gertrude Hoffmann, Pavlova, the Morgan dancers, and the Ziegfeld Follies in former years.

"A man doesn't have time to go every place in this town, and I've been intending to go and see them, but just haven't had the time. I'll sure come out tonight, though."

"I think you'll enjoy seeing us dance. One of our girls was with Pavlova a season, and another was with the Metropolitan ballet. They are all talented dancers. I was lucky to get in with them, but I have been studying with Carlotta Wilson for two years, and could have gone with her six months ago, if my mother had not objected."

Mr. De Jonghe stirred his coffee nervously. He squirmed uncomfortably in his chair while he wondered whether this wonderful actress had been snapped up by some other man. Perhaps she was only flirting with him. He hitched forward at the thought; would it be all right to enquire whether or not she was engaged? No, that might look like a proposal of marriage. He knew that you must use great care with women or they snap you up before you know it. He wondered how he could lead the subject around to love. Sari chatting on about her career and her plans was scarcely heard in the absorption of this new problem. Finally when she paused after making some remark about her sisters he asked,

"Are any of your sisters married?"

"No. Ward, she's just two years older than I am has been engaged I think, but Nita has never been in love, though she's awfully old. Way past twenty-two."

Here was his opening. He looked down at his plate,

twisted his fork, smiled and asked as archly as he could.

"I suppose you have been in love oodles of times?"

The archness was a failure, but Sari did not notice the tenseness in his manner. She had worked herself up conversationally to a point where she was anxious to reveal anything that was suggested to her, and more if possible.

"You see," she said kitting her brows and bending absorbedly to her task of exploring her own psychology, "I don't think I was much interested in boys until I was about seventeen, then I decided that I would like to be popular with them. So I tried it and I was quite successful. My junior year in high school I tore around with *eighteen* youngsters. It sounds ridiculous when I think of it now, and I'm sure I don't know how I ever kept it up. It was a regular game and not a very honorable game at that. My health broke down under the strain and I almost had to quit school. I found out how it was done and I decided that it wasn't much fun after all. It has its disadvantages. You have to allow yourself to be bored nine-tenths of the time.

"My next experiment," continued Sari, neglecting her food in the interest she felt in her subject, "was in making them fall in love with me. It was fun thinking of a system. I might say that I have an older sister that is nearly perfect in the art, and by imitating her I soon learned how it was done. But I was simply overwhelmed when they did fall." Frankie Field took on a faint romantic touch in her imagination as she spoke. "Not one of them was anything in my young life but even so, the only thing that

saved me from marrying—I was terribly conscience stricken,—was that I am not polygamous."

Mr. De Jonghe, whose mouth had dropped open, did not tell her critically that she meant polyandrous. He was regarding her with an adoration that had no time for such nice exactions. Up to this time he had believed that gentile girls had no morals. The recital of Sari's scruples thrilled him with the sense that he was becoming a broad-minded man of the world. He understood her so well.

He sighed.

"My experience has been something like yours," he said. "I started stepping out when I was about thirteen. From the beginning I laughed at the idea of one girl. I thought that association was the thing. I have always had a craving for variety, an acquaintance with girls of every type. It certainly has been broadening. Yet I cannot say whether or not it has been the best policy as I have suffered many disillusionments and have lots of times lost respect for the whole species."

"Isn't that dreadful," said Sari, leaning her head on her elbow and giving him her whole attention. "But didn't you ever fall in love?"

"Naturally I liked some better than others, and even thought of marriage in some cases, but never seriously. Another link in my reasoning is applying the old adage to all females, it's something about comparing a woman with a street car; if you miss one another will be along soon. Now, please don't get conceited when I tell you that you are the first girl in my experience that has ever seemed not to fit that old adage. Well, it's hard to try and explain big things—"

III

The waiter hovered behind the young man.

"Two checks," said Sari, holding up two fingers. Poor Mr. Cecil De Jonghe reddened to his ears. "Won't you let me pay," he begged Sari in a hurried undertone, but Sari shook her head.

The waiter, thinking to help Sari to get her dinner paid for by shaming the young man, bent his head near the young man's ear and said in an enquiring tone and imperfect English, "Two checkka?"

"Two cock-eyed checks," said Sari briskly holding up two fingers again and shaking her bobbed hair about, as she nodded twice emphatically. "Oh please," breathed Mr. De Jonghe, looking down at his plate in shame and agony.

The waiter's honest Greek face looked commiseratingly at Sari and he bent nearer the young man's ear and almost shouting, "Two Checks? Two Checks? No?"

Poor Mr. De Jonghe almost put his curly head in his plate in his distress, and desire to ignore the waiter.

"Two checks," said Sari again, triumphing in her independence. The waiter shrugged, glanced contemptuously at the young man, lifted his eyes to heaven to witness the meanness of some young men, when dining with beautiful young girls, and clipped the two checks which he drew out of his pocket.

Mr. De Jonghe, after this ordeal felt quite unequal to the task of passing the Greek at the counter, when they should pay the checks, and in his fear of offending Sari, and his great sympathy with her ideals, and his enormous respect for her character and independ-

ence, suffered acutely for some moments while Sari was imparting further embroidered information.

"I made up my mind to give up everything, and just work. I worked hard at the studio. My family would have taken those hard hours from me, but I was able to resist their entreaties to have me be a mere doll at home and do nothing—"

CHAPTER II

I

THAT night Mr. De Jonghe made his appearance at the hotel where Sari danced and waited for her afterward. From that time it became his custom to breakfast with her every morning, practice his piano and take his lesson while Sari worked in the studio, take her to dinner, escort her to the hotel, wait for her and take her home.

Sari had purchased a nile green gown, which had caught her eye in a window on Michigan avenue. There was a long tight bodice, of green, orange and dull gold like the skin of a brilliant tropical reptile.

Clad in this costume it became her nightly habit after her part in the evening's performance was done to appear on the ball-room of the hotel at precisely a quarter of twelve escorted by Mr. Cecil De Jonghe, smartly and exquisitely clad. Wearing the most completely haughty poise ever achieved by two members of the human race simultaneously, they would follow a waiter to a small table, and wait like august potentates for the music to start.

Wearing their conception of themselves as world-worn souls, they danced conscientiously until the music stopped, and then climbed on a bus and rode part way home. A mile from the hotel, they generally got off and walked, parting reluctantly at her door at about two o'clock in the morning.

II

One hot night after they had left the bus they remembered the moon on the lake. With a disregard for park policemen not usually discovered in people of such amazing worldliness as these two they walked over and sat down on the steps overlooking the lake, very near the place where Mr. De Jonghe had first set eyes upon Sari.

"And to think that I didn't see you at all," said Sari. "My what an age ago it seems."

"Just three weeks next Thursday," said Cecil.

"Goodness, it seems longer than that, I feel as if I had known you forever."

"Me too. It's because we've been together so much."

At their feet the slanting gray stone break water slid imperceptibly into the smooth and luminous blue surface of the sea, with a slab of gold laid on it by the rising moon. The black and silent park behind them lay like the sleeping coast of some romantic island in the south seas.

Sari began to feel drowsy.

"Rest your head on my shoulder," offered Cecil earnestly.

"It's like my home. We always have the lake. It seems like part of me sometimes," said Sari. "It does to all of us. We've lived beside it so long, and it grows on you somehow so that you miss it if you don't see it."

"I sure wish we could stay out here all night."

Sari sat up.

"Well, why shouldn't we?"

Well, really there was no reason. Who on earth

would be the wiser if they did or did not. Sari settled back comfortably in his arm. They were silent looking at the moon.

"Wonder if it will get cold toward morning?"

"You can have my coat if it does!"

Another silence. Sari dozed till Cecil earnestly kissed a certain dimple he admired in her cheek.

"Isn't it great out here. Why didn't we think of this before."

"I wonder what time it is."

"I bet it's hot over at the Grand Central." The waves lapped very softly against the stone. Cecil kissed a dimple again. A policeman on a bicycle rode ponderously past, incongruous, making his silent round, tinging their idyl with the comic. In the bushes back of them it seemed as if strange figures moved.

Resting against him Sari's eyes traveled out into the sea where a lighthouse twinkled, blending its gloom with the pattern of the stars; in the breezeless night they seemed to dance, the only active things in the whole still world. To the south, another white light winked off and on, alternating red. She fell to watching it dreamily, counting—fifteen-sixteen-red, one-two-three-four—white—she slept.

Cecil held her tenderly, almost fearfully in his arms. He kissed her again just above her lips. Long since the moon had left the sea, and shone high on its westward journey. Again the kindly policeman rode by, silently, his great haunches moving rhythmically as he pedaled. She stirred. "It's getting light—" The pale blue attenuation of dawn was being poured into the thick darkness. Out of the eerie lavender cloudiness the scene was taking form.

"Sari, I want to kiss you awfully."

With a sudden realization that her nerves were straining for his arms she drew him to her in a kiss that swept through them like a draft through a red coal fire.

"Oh Sari," and "Oh Cecil."

III

She broke away from him. "Look it's nearly day." He caught her to him again. They watched the mists clear off the lake.

"Let's run down to the lake and wash our hands and get washed up for breakfast. What time is it?"

"It's nearly five."

They splashed their hands in the cool lake water and bathed their faces.

"I'm simply cock-eyed I'm so hungry. I wonder what time the restaurant's open."

"Some of them stay open all night. I wouldn't want to go until after six, though."

They strolled along the paved beach.

"Everything is wonderful at this time of the morning," said Sari. "Hasn't it been fun. I wouldn't have missed it for anything in the world. Poor dear old cock-eyed mother would simply stand on her ear if she knew it."

"Older people are a bore, sometimes," remarked Cecil. "Not the slightest possible harm in our staying out all night, only every one would lift up their hands in horror if they knew it."

"Let's play ball," proposed Sari. "Let's roll up our handkerchiefs and play ball."

They tossed the improvised ball back and forth for

a few minutes. Then Cecil ran up to Sari and drew her down to a seat on the stone and kissed her.

"Will you ever forget tonight—I mean last night?"

"Never," promised Sari. "It's been simply perfect. I don't think I'll go to the studio this afternoon. I think I'll telephone them that I've got to stay home and sleep."

"Poor darling. Are you tired?"

"A little. I think we might go and have breakfast now."

They got up to go. Sari put on her hat. The sun coming up over the lake, blazed its own trail by a streak of golden fire that glimmered upon the water. Toward the town the long line of the city pleasure pier, with its colors showing clear in the smokeless atmosphere looked like the efforts of a child in crude crayons. Curving toward them from the south the lake touched the shore of the Oak street beach where a spot of sand shone yellow with the sun upon it.

"Let's look just once," whispered Cecil, "It's so beautiful." They wandered slowly across the park, and into an unfamiliar Greek restaurant. Sari was becoming more sleepy every minute. She was only able to eat a grape fruit, but Cecil ordered a large repast. When they had eaten, Sari proposed that she go home alone.

"I think it looks better on the whole," she observed. "Not that I'm at all ashamed of being out all night, but some of those people there are sort of insinuating."

"Well, I'll come by in fifteen minutes and you can wave to me from your window that you are all right," said Cecil anxiously.

"I'll let up the blind fast, and pull it down," said Sari.

IV

This satisfactory plan worked out perfectly, and Cecil went to his room, and Sari rolled into bed without having encountered any one. At noon she called the studio on the telephone to say that she would not be down, and went back to bed. At about five she wakened to find a letter under her door. She recognized Cecil's writing.

Nine o'clock.

Dearest Sari,

I am about to go against one of the things which I have always practiced, but you will forgive me because this is an exception to the rule. I hardly know how to start or to state things clearly to you. It is the first time I have ever been in such a condition and advice is what I desire—and your own advice. I have carefully thought over the subject for some time so that the whole thing is not, as you may suppose, extemporaneous.

Oh yes, it's all about a girl as you can well imagine. (Don't pass away yet; the worst is yet to come.) Since I have been here in Chicago and especially since I have met you I have had a good chance to do a lot of thinking about the uncertain future which lies ahead. My thoughts have been along the average possibilities, nothing else. I am on the way to my twentieth year with nothing tangible to look forward to except money, old age, probably a good to society, and ordinary things like that. But what's the good of money and things if you can't be happy late in life?

There is a certain young lady whom I care for more than I can tell you, more than she would like to be-

lieve. She would probably think I was kidding her if I wrote her along those lines.

Again I like her so well that I even fear to lose her friendship by writing indiscreet or undiplomatic letters to her at this time. If I can't have her love now or never I certainly want to keep her friendship always. Therefore I hesitate to write anything that might diminish our friendship.

I cannot hope nor do I desire anything of a binding promise at present. Oh no, that's in the future. Remember this is not a puppy love affair, but it has grown out of sincere understanding and calm reasoning.

Old dear, I am going to try and get some sleep now. Please don't keep me in suspense and love from—

CECIL.

Sari read the letter over twice and then tucked it under her pillow, smiling happily. It would be nice to be married before any of the other girls were married. She liked Cecil better than anyone she had ever met. She couldn't bear to be away from him for a minute, no one understood her like he did. Yes, she loved him. With this satisfactory thought she dozed for fifteen minutes longer, and then got up.

She had not come out of her bath when the buzzer up above her door, followed by a loud knocking on the door, announced in the person of the colored maid that there was a special delivery letter for her. She opened this eagerly.

Dear Sari,

I have always tried to keep my will power above sentiment. Because if I ever gave it out to a girl and

allowed my sentiment to overcome my reason—then should it happen that the girl would not be mine, it would just naturally wreck my life. You say bosh, probably, but never forget that no one knows one better than one knows oneself. I think I know my failings, abilities and what not.

I have known scores of fellows who never held a job when single, but after marriage or even engagement the idea of something in the future changed their whole lives.

Please don't forget reasoning, love or anything else is not a matter of mere years. There have been infant prodigies as long as the world has existed. I am not an infant prodigy. I just want you to note that it is the man not the years.

You really didn't know me awfully well as regarded my past before I met you. I mean that, modestly speaking, I have crowded into my life between thirteen and nineteen as much as the average man does up until at least thirty.

I am going to turn in and try and get some sleep now, old dear, so, so long, and won't you forget about all my advice and everything but, Oh yes, I must tell you that the girl of my clear reasoning was you—

The tail on the *u* of the final word trailed off down the page and there was no name signed. Sari was delighted. She dressed as hurriedly as possible and then ran out to the telegraph station and sent the following message to Mr. Cecil De Jonghe:

"Everything fine and dandy. Received both your letters. Much love.
SARI."

This message so relieved the distraught mind of Mr. Cecil De Jonghe that he jumped up from the bed

where he had been trying to sleep all day—rushed to the telephone and tried to reach Sari. But she had gone to the hotel for the evening, and so there was nothing to do but dress and follow her there.

CHAPTER III

I

WHEN Anita and Dizzy had been gone for two days it seemed to Ward as if they had been gone for weeks. There was nothing to do and no one to talk to. Why, why did she not hear from Rod? She thought of him constantly. With his departure she had definitely made her decision: he was the prince. And now there was nothing to do but wait and hope.

She was glad when Mary Field broke the morning's monotony. Mary, too, had found her prince that summer. And with the departure of little Bill Wicker for an apartment in Kenwood she felt herself as deserted as Ward. Into the three casual calls, the automatically tossed compliments, and the imitation love looks she had woven her love legend. And the warped material on the loom looked to her like a shining cloth of gold.

Mary seated herself on a straight chair, crooked her neck in the attitude that she considered best exhibited her profile, and began to monologue:

Wicker had understood her. He had a sort of intuitive feeling for her that was so delicate it had never been put into words. Though he had never actually spoken of his love for her a woman's intuition was infallible. She knew how he felt. Besides, why had he called on her if he was not harboring matrimonial intentions? Did he consider that she was the sort of girl to be trifled with? No, she could not believe that. That was not her reputation. She knew

that too many men had gazed with longing eyes from afar, not daring to come too near because they were too poor to marry. It was that she had not encouraged him enough. He was neglecting her to see if she would repent. Her dignity and the garment of sweet virginity around her roused an awe in him that had made him afraid to speak without some word of encouragement. And she had withheld it. Not because she had not favored his suit, but because her maidenly feelings and her modesty had prevented it. He would come back.

The telephone rang.

It was Sari. Ward was delighted. They arranged to lunch together, and Ward turned back to Mary who now rose and took her leave with a few platitudes about how lonesome it must be with the three other girls away.

II

At luncheon Sari announced that she was engaged. "But Sari, you're not in love with that little dark-eyed child you had with you at the station!"

"Yes, I am. And we are going to get married."

"Why, Sari!"

"What?"

"He's only a baby."

"He's older than I am!"

"Isn't he Jewish?"

"Well?"

"Why, but Sari, you wouldn't marry a Jew, would you?"

"Why not?"

"Well," Ward's definitely formed ideals about love

struggled with the ideas she had gained from observing certain sets at the University snub Jewish students. "Of course, I suppose, if you loved him. But you haven't known him long enough to know whether you do or not."

"Oh yes I have, Ward. I know you think you've had an awful lot of experience with men, but in some ways I bet I know more about them than you do."

"How?"

"Well, for instance, you've never been insulted, have you?"

"Insulted!"

"I mean if a man practically asked you to be his mistress what would you do?"

"Sari, what a horrible word. Where did you hear it?"

"Oh, Ward, don't pretend you're shocked. That's only a hang-over from things mother has told you. What would you do?"

Ward considered. Sari was right. She wasn't shocked. She saw it when Sari pointed it out, but before she had thought she was. "I should think it would be an interesting experience. That sort of thing would really try you so that you could know what kind of material you were made of."

Sari was uninterested in this view.

"Well a man did insult me that way once, last summer. A manager from New York. He told me he would put me on the stage if I would love him, and he made it all pretty clear. But he wasn't attractive."

"Well, Cecil hasn't insulted you has he?"

"Good heavens, no."

"I've heard that Jews never take Christian girls really seriously. And that they try to, well, lead them on, and then desert them."

"I'm sure that isn't true. Besides Cecil isn't a regular Jew. He's not orthodox. Why, just imagine, he's never been inside of a synagogue. His people don't believe in anything. They are like father, sort of socialists. His father had even been to hear father talk when he used to give his Sunday evening talks."

"But Sari, you're not radical. None of us are radical except Dizzy. All of us fancy we are in love at your age and mine, I believe, but it isn't always serious."

"Well, it is in this case, and you can just break the news to mother that it's going to come off."

"Not soon, though?"

"Well, I may go to New York with the Carlotta Wilson dancers late in November. I'm not sure when it will be. Cecil wants to get established some place."

They talked all afternoon. Ward took the news home with a heavy heart.

III

Cecil himself had no such definite ideas about marriage as Sari had read into his epistles. But Sari's whole-hearted acceptance of him had carried him beyond his depth. He was afraid that his family whom he loved deeply would never forgive him if he married a gentile. But he hoped that perhaps his father's admiration for Tyndall Harris might mitigate their prejudice in time. He was certain that he loved Sari, irretrievably and devotedly. His only worry was about his family and his future income. He wanted to have his career well started before he married. It made him very happy to know that Sari was waiting for him, and that in ten or twelve years they might be

united in marriage, at which time his parents would have learned to love Sari, and he would be making enough to buy her beautiful things. Sometimes, sitting with Sari desperation would seize him. He would long earnestly for a fortune until his mind wandered to something else. But most of the time he evenly and happily looked forward to a very distant wedding date.

"Oh Sari, everything will be wonderful for us some day. Just have patience and wait."

"I will love you and be beautiful for you. And take care of you."

"'Member that story I wrote. The ending was the best part of it. 'Member it?"

"Yes, I remember, but how did it go?"

"You need some one to take care of you," said Bill. "How about you?" said Marian. "Don't you like it?"

"No, I think it's *so* bad!"

"And I think it's *so* good!"

They laughed and kissed each other.

"I wish I had a lip stick."

"You don't need a lip stick. Why none of the really smart dames use lip sticks." He put his cheek against hers suddenly, and stopped the scolding he had begun. "I've got to get a lot of money, some way. Just got to."

IV

Ward, tired and nervously exhausted by her long day, did not break the news to her mother until dinner was nearly over.

Mrs. Harris stared straight ahead of her as if frozen with terror. "I knew something terrible would happen to her. Poor child! Poor little child, in the clutches of that terrible Jew."

"It's dreadful isn't it?"

"Why did I ever let her leave home!" She sat silent while Ward made a pretense of finishing her dinner. "I must telephone her at once."

"She's at the theater now. But I got her to promise to come home for luncheon tomorrow to see you!"

Mrs. Harris spent a sleepless night, alternately praying and weeping. She could not conquer her fear that she would be unable to influence Sari.

At luncheon there was no emotional scene. In some ways Mrs. Harris had the adaptability of youth. She controlled her feelings, now, and was ready almost desperately to use any means to keep Sari from committing so rash an act as a marriage at her age with this young Jew. The very dignity which she gave to it, however, enhanced the romance of the situation in Sari's eyes. The one thing she had rather dreaded was that her mother would treat it lightly, as a boy and girl affair. This gravity which underlay her mother's manner, thrilled her with a sense of her own importance. She had often felt grown up away from home. This was the first time she had felt an adult with her mother.

At luncheon nothing was said about the great news. When they were seated afterward in the living room, Mrs. Harris finally brought up the subject. She asked questions to which it had never occurred to Sari to give serious consideration, such as what Cecil's family would think, how they were to live afterward? Sari's imagination had been pre-occupied with the glamour of romance. Now it leaped to the glamour

of house-keeping, her importance as a woman among women.

V

The affair climaxed swiftly, solely through the stupidity of Sari's own family. They had become so alarmed over what she might do, that they went to lengths to keep her from this folly. Soon after she had found out where Sari lived, Mrs. Harris followed her, and begged and pleaded all day. Ward wept and pleaded. Sari was non-committal, enjoying the sensation she was causing in a more or less heartless fashion. Her mother's tears did not move her since she had seen them off and on during her life over such things as her own failure to wear rubbers. Ward's long arguments against it did not touch her reasoning powers.

Nita dealt the deciding blow. She sent an imperative telegram to Sari commanding her not to marry Cecil and stating in strong terms her objection to having a Jew in the family; Nita would have done better if she had placed the affairs in the hands of Mrs. de Remy. Sari was thoroughly moved. Her anger blazed. She felt that she hated Nita. With the telegram in her hand, she called Cecil on the telephone. She would show Nita, the snob, and her whole family.

"Cecil," she said in a tremulous voice in the phone, "if you want me at all, you'll have to take me now."

Poor bewildered little Cecil took her.

They were married that afternoon. A telegram was sent to Nita; Mrs. Harris and Ward were informed by telephone.

VI

And so Sari's curiosity about sex was gratified in a respectable fashion. Her mother invaded Sari's green room, which had become in reality a bridal chamber, the next day, and tearfully made the best of things. She accepted Cecil for a son-in-law. Cecil sweetly allowed her to accept him. He was pre-occupied over his own family who had sent no word of any kind, though they too had been telegraphed the news.

Cecil, unlike Sari, loved his family with a devotion that was deeply in his consciousness. They were on his mind all the time. He could fancy that his mother was hardly believing the news. She never would accept disagreeable truths when they were at first forced on her. "Maybe we get another telegram saying it ain't true?" He could almost hear her saying it to his father. He longed so to hear from them. But, in all probability they were done with him forever. His father had always said he would cast off any child of his who married a gentile.

Cecil left Mrs. Harris with her newly wedded daughter and wandered by the lake. The white frilled waves sounded dimly ironic like countless chuckles. He would have to get a job and make some money immediately. That was certain. Perhaps he could get one playing the piano in a movie. His allowance from home would stop, he knew. And a liberal allowance it had been. He faintly regretted it. But Sari, his wife, too had a claim on his loyalty, and he was not sorry that he had married her; only worried, and anxious to have things turn out for the best. He could not live on the money she was making, and he couldn't have her making more money than he, either.

Mrs. Harris, after drying her eyes, began to take an interest in Sari's future. After all, it was interesting to have a married daughter. It was the fate she desired for all her girls. And Cecil was attractive, and Sari had said he was not absolutely Jewish. Perhaps he could be converted to Christianity. That young Mrs. De Jonghe, in spite of early advantages, could not precisely be said to be a Christian, did not occur to her.

"And how much money is Cecil making?"

"He's not making anything now. But he's going to get a job in a movie, playing the piano, and then he'll make seventy or eighty dollars a week."

"Do moving picture pianists earn that much?"

"Well at first, he might just get about forty or fifty dollars, but he's so talented that he's sure to get more right away."

"I doubt it. How many young men of his age are getting even forty dollars a week."

"But Cecil is exceptional."

"Well, I'm sure I hope the butcher and baker will think so."

She repeated the conversation that night to Ward, climaxing on "I told her that I hoped the butcher and baker would think as much of Cecil as she does." It seemed to her to have been an appropriately keen thing to have said.

VII

Cecil did get a job playing in a moving picture theater almost at once. One afternoon, when they had been married nearly a week, he found some housekeeping rooms half a block from the Oak street beach.

They were new. So new that the furniture was not

yet all in. An old house had been remodeled so that two tiny apartments were made, one on the third, and one on the second floor. Mr. Bixbie, the owner, and his wife occupied the first floor. On the second floor was a room which Mr. Bixbie's mother occupied and the bathroom which everyone in the house would have to use. The second floor apartment was sixty-five dollars, and the third floor, sixty. Each had an airy parlor with a bed which closed up into the wall, and a large kitchen that would have to be used also for a dining room.

They liked the upper one best, but by the time Cecil could get Sari to look at it, on her way to the hotel, it was rented, and an elderly couple were trying hard to persuade Mr. Bixbie to rent them the second floor. Sari and Cecil closed the deal, agreeing to move in the next day, and paying a month's rent in advance.

"Do you want us to sign a lease?" asked Cecil with a business-like air.

"No," said Mr. Bixbie, a solemn young man, whom they suspected of having been married scarcely longer than they. "I prefer to deal with people on their honor. If you pay your rent each month in advance that's all I ask for." It was evidently his first experience as a landlord, and he was taking it very seriously. "Now, of course, as long as the furniture isn't all in this apartment you'll naturally be put to some inconvenience, so we'll say the rent will begin on the first of October, instead of tomorrow if that's all right with you." He turned his head and howled at the top of his voice, "Oh Tweetie!"

"Ya-as!" answered his wife from the next room.

"She'll tell you about the linens," explained Mr. Bixbie.

Tweetie was a well corseted young woman with

large gentle brown eyes, and a small mouth. She pronounced all her vowels perfectly, but in the wrong places.

"Aow ya-as, eba-out the deshes. Wal, ah've gowt ayv'rythen fexed." There was no dialect of any special place, but she spoke with so much assurance that Sari could not doubt that she had cultivated it.

They arranged to move in the next day, and then Sari hurried off to the Carlotta Wilson dancers, and Cecil to his moving picture theater.

CHAPTER IV

I

WARD and Helene Partridge, in raincoats and slouch hats, walked briskly down the boulevard. The asphalt pavement shining in the rain like a river, was crossed at intervals with golden paths cast by the round, electric moons that lighted the street.

Helene was clinging desperately to the love legend, and bitterly condemning other girls for Shavian practices. She let her mind play with shuddering fascination on the practices of the courtezan, while scorning sex itself in her more self-satisfied moments.

"Yes, I think that a woman reaches her level, attains her spiritual specific in the sea of marriage," said Ward. "That is poise—self-satisfaction—peace, I suppose."

"Married women are so self-satisfied," said Helene, beginning on a note of spite, but plunging immediately to her own problem. "Sometimes I think I'll get married. It's the natural thing for a woman, after all."

This flimsy pretense—part of the general fantasy of her host of lovers with which she was always satisfying her imaginary conception of herself,—aroused a pitying fear in Ward. Her first doubt of the love legend had been roused—this legend which had ruined Helene. Would Helene's prince come along? Ward wondered. And with the wonder came the fear that she was becoming futile. Uselessness was wasting her. Was she doomed, like Helene, to pettiness after all?

On account of her seniority in years Helene patronized both Nita and Ward, in telling of the hearts she had broken. She pretended that at their age she had been swamped with masculine attention, but anxiety for her future, shook her whole being with a burning eagerness, masked by a stiff-lipped pride when the breath of a man's attention blew past her.

Listening to Helene's rhapsodies on Bill Wicker; to her limitless conjectures and conclusions always flattering to herself, Ward experienced sharp sensations of gloom, melancholy, apprehension. Was her affair with Rod, then, nothing but imagination? Was it based on smoky visions that would be dispelled by the clear wind of time? Had Rod been trifling with her, as she knew Wicker had been trifling with Helene? Sometimes, half convinced by Helene's colored stories, that Wicker was the hero Helene thought him, she would reassure Helene that Wicker was earnestly longing for her, only kept off by Mrs. Partridge's heavy guard.

It was now over a month since Rod had gone. Ward's inner life had become an absorption in him. Every trifling event of the day reminded her of some phase of their friendship. The telephone's ring meant a wild hope that it might be he. Every mail delivery encouraged her for a minute with the thought of a possible letter.

Helene's confidence subtly took away from the dignity of her affair with Rod. Was she destined to go on year in and year out in this poignant atmosphere of stale virginity, feeling the pain, the pathos of the unwanted, until she became dull, apathetic? No, she hugged her pain to her breast. Her very sufferings linked her to youth and hope. Aesthetic sufferings, they were, to be dispelled by the interest of a new play

or by an invitation to dinner from a new man. It was only when she saw her feelings reflected in Helene, heard the excuses she made for Rod, in Helene's mouth, pardoning Wicker, that a fierce, hot feeling, almost of revolt, arose in her.

Behind the falling curtain of the rain, Helene and she were phantoms on the street, two timid fugitives shut in the mist of rainy silver, frustrate, longing, both.

II

As the days hurried on toward Christmas, Nita, in New York, was very busy. She already had a circle of girls about her as she had in Lakeshore, and at the University. Admiring, inferior girls whom she patronized. These girls were different from Helene and Mary, in that they had real love affairs to confide. Many of them were what Nita called "messy," by which she meant that they came as near to being illicit as they could without being actually so. Nita was apt to generalize all sex as messy.

Howard wrote often. His letters only hinted that he was in love with her.

At Christmas time he sent her a small diamond ring, which she promptly sent back. After that she was unhappy for some time, but she had been unable to see any other solution. He had never proposed. He had never told her that he loved her. Therefore she could not accept jewelry from him. Besides she would never care to show the girls such an inexpensive ring. For a while it looked as if the affair was off forever. Then Howard came forward nobly with a declaration. She replied, "I do love you, Howard," but not impulsively, as Sari had done by telegraph.

She wrote and re-wrote the letter and then sent it on handsome stationery on its trip across the continent.

She wrote home that she was engaged, and there was much rejoicing in the breasts of her mother and her sister Ward.

CHAPTER V

I

CECIL drooped more and more as the days went on and he did not hear from his parents. Sari, pleasantly indifferent to the feelings of her family, could not understand his sadness; she hoped with an unselfishness novel to her nature that his mother, at least, would soon relent.

Sometimes Cecil was sentimental over his mother, and told Sari how well she had understood him, and how she had always taken his part against his father who was a gruff old boy, but kind at heart. He called them the pater and the mater.

So when a letter post-marked St. Louis came for Cecil during the first week in December, her eager joy bubbled as she handed it to him.

"Dear Cecil and Sari:

"Will you please come and visit us for New Years. Always we have the whole family to come and eat with us New Years. You can ask Cecil.

"Papa wants you should both come home. If you have not money we will send. Come as soon as you can. Come before New Years if you can.

"The boys are crazy to see you. Aunt Becky wants you should stay with her a few days. Write soon and let us know when you could come. Much love,

"MRS. DE JONGHE."

Evidently written by a person unaccustomed to the

use of the pen the signature looked as if it had been accomplished with a sigh of relief.

Happiness diffused itself through Cecil. It was as if a button of release had been placed on his soul allowing its natural joyousness to bubble forth.

"The gang all gathers round on New Year's eve," he explained nonchalantly. His aggressively picturesque Americanism struck Sari afresh after reading the letter which had been something of a shock to her. Were Cecil's people then really that Jewy kind of Jews that one read about? She knew that they were not orthodox, and she had not imagined that idiom would be part of their language any more than it was part of Cecil's. Did his mother and father speak with an accent, then!

Cecil's clan celebrated neither Christmas nor the Jewish holidays. But on the last night of December they had a custom of gathering together, forty or fifty of them for merry-making—cooking turkeys with prodigious stuffings, and exercising the subtle arts of the Jewish cuisine. Cecil quickened with pleasure as he described it to Sari.

They decided to spend Christmas in Lakeshore as Dizzy was coming home for the holidays. Then they would go to St. Louis, on the last day of the old year—Cecil's day for drawing his salary.

II

"Ooh Cecil! What for you want to go and do that?" Tearfully, with a gesture half bantering, half deprecating, wholly loving, Mrs. De Jonghe welcomed her boy at the railroad station in St. Louis. For Sari, she had the sentence, "So little—so young. What does mamma think?"

Sari rightly interpreting this as an enquiry into her mother's feelings on the subject of her marriage, muttered that her mother thought she was young, too. Her freedom of movement deserted her for the first time in her life. A gesture would have been adventure. A step required courage.

"Poor papa is here with the machine. Dear papa how he feels." She sighed and led the way to the street talking all the time to Cecil. How thin he looked—chicken for dinner—Sari was thin, too—They would fatten her up—lots of nice milk would do it—did she drink malted milk—every night before bed she should eat it—these restaurants—

Poor papa turned out to be a fierce looking individual who sat behind the wheel, glowered and tended strictly to his own business. His eyebrows bristled, his black eyes darted out at Sari who shrank back thinking, quite erroneously, that he had conceived a violent distaste for her. He ejected one sentence of surly welcome to Cecil and then glared ferociously to conceal his emotion. This combined with the countenance that nature had given him made him appear a formidable person, which he was not, being completely under the thumb of mamma, who ruled the household.

"You should tuck in her feet, Cecil. Cold, do you want her to get? Ach, how little! How thin! The boys—how they will love her. Roger will be jealous—huh Cecil?" She exchanged glances with Cecil, nodding, congratulating him over Sari's head. "Isn't she wonderful?" Cecil's eyes asked mutely. And his mother answered aloud out of her love for him, "Beautiful. So stylish! I guess she's clever, too? I don't know?"

"Oh, is she?" Cecil beamed, almost beside himself

with joy at his mother's renewed friendship. He bent ostentatiously over Sari. "Cold, dear?"

"Quite warm," murmured Sari, still overcome by the feeling of strangeness. The vividness of Mrs. De Jonghe's personality blighted her own. For the first time in her life she failed to be fully herself. This feeling was to intensify as the visit progressed and she met more members of Cecil's race.

A Jew among gentiles is always a vivid person. He stands out in heavy outlines. He has a tang; a blare; an exotic brilliancy that may repel or attract. But the Aryan among Jews! Against a solid Hebraic background his pale pigments merge into the shadows. Color deserts him. Foreign he may look in a mean negligible way. But he is faint, hollow cheeked, dulled. The eye passes him, bounding on to the next Jew.

III

Cecil's small brother Bertram, a child of five, ran to Sari as soon as he saw her, and refused to be drawn away. She seemed to have the same magnetism for him that she had for Cecil. Bertram resented Cecil's nightly usurpation of her, and climbed on her bed as soon as he awoke in the morning.

In the house next door lived Cecil's cousins, all with good old English names. There was Roger, twenty, virile, on the edge of becoming representatively racial. Francis, twelve, dreamy, much like Cecil in temperament, and Cynthia, twenty-eight, blatantly, determinedly like a flapper of fiction.

Cynthia and Roger came to dinner that first night. "New spoons, Aunt Ray," exclaimed Cynthia as

they sat down to the soup. "Swell?" On the table small, shiny, round-bowled spoons lay contemptuously beside the other dull, worn table ware.

"You like them, Cyn?" asked Cecil's mother anxiously. "What you think, Sari? Such a funny shape. It don't go in the mouth right. What you think?"

"Aw say, Aunt Ray, you're not supposed to swallow them," said Cynthia. "You should sip your soup from the side. See? Like this."

"I should sip from the side? That's the style?"

"You should be foolish, Ray," said Cecil's father. "Get me the old spoon, the big size."

"Look, Sari drinks from the side like a cup," shouted little Bertram.

"Ach, her appetite like a bird's it is!" said Mrs. De Jonghe looking at Sari pityingly. "Why don't you eat something?" She filled her daughter-in-law's plate until it ran over on the cloth. "Some salad you must have, too. Cecil, every night before bed, hot malted milk you should give her!"

IV

As the guests began to arrive for the New Year's party Sari began to feel more and more lost. Roger brought a little blonde girl on his arm who looked pale and scared. The color had retreated from even her lips under the strain of combating his lusty swaggering personality. She was the only gentle besides Sari at the party. Her name was Janet.

Cecil's Aunt Becky, with a rich bosom swelling out under her dimpled chin, led in Uncle Pete, slim, suave and adoringly proud of Aunt Becky; Rosie Shunemann, her red hair streaked with gray, aggressively

the unhappy virgin came with them. Early in the evening, a curly haired pretty young girl told her fortune and promised her seven husbands. This Rosie pathetically repeated from time to time during the evening.

About eleven thirty the Jews began coming so thick and fast that they seemed to Sari to pile up, melt and disappear, like snow-flakes at the beginning of a storm. Faster, and faster, thicker and thicker, more and more, until there was such a crowd of strange Jewish faces, indistinguishable one from the other, yet all different, that Sari found herself low-spiritedly wishing for someone to come and dig her out. What a variety of types there were. How very different one Jew could be from another and still be markedly Jewish-looking. This was a great discovery to Sari, who had always accepted the theory that all Jews were alike hook-nosed, black eyed, and curly headed. Here were blue-eyed, straight-haired, red-headed, Grecian-nosed Jews. Only one or two, here and there, bore all the marks accredited to the traditional Hebrew.

"Do you feel yourself anywhere about?" asked the pale blond girl Janet, in a whisper.

Sari stared. Then she understood.

"I must be here," she said. "But I really can't say that I feel aggressively in the landscape."

"I know I'm not here," said the pale blonde. "I just can't get hold of myself. You look like a poor little drowning kitten."

Cecil was the handsomest person in the family. From his grandmother to his little third cousin David it was evident that he was admitted to hold the family honors for beauty of form and figure.

"You ought to see Cecil in a bathing suit, he's simply great, Janet," called Cynthia. She was seated on

Roger's knee, drinking wine. She had just finished proclaiming in a loud voice that they could carry her out, she meant to get drunk, when her attention had been called to Cecil standing near Sari. "He's simply stunning looking in a bathing suit, Janet. That boy's figure!"

"Janet likes me in a bathing suit," said Roger, who was responsible for Janet's presence at the party.

"Oh no, you're too hairy, Rog," said Cynthia. She wore evening dress and an enormous bouquet of orchids. The young man to whom she was engaged sat pale, and strained looking on a nearby sofa, and never removed his eyes from her face.

Janet and Sari were the center of the young people, who lead by Cynthia, and Roger, were anxious to show the older folks that they were very free, modern and American. The younger women all smoked and talked with a turn of the shoulders, a lift of the eyebrow, a hint of an English accent.

"Oh the crowd's celebrating," said Cynthia. "You should see them. They began this afternoon down at the Random."

"Already?" asked Mrs. De Jonghe.

"Yes. Janet and I were out there for tea. And three men waiting for an elevator came up dead drunk. One of them grabbed me for a kiss."

"Swell men?"

"Didn't any of them grab Janet?" asked Roger jealously.

"No, their elevator came along just then—"

"Well, can you imagine that," demanded Roger indignantly. "I guess they couldn't have seen Janet, then."

At midnight a gorgeous feast was served. Roast turkeys were brought, deliciously browned, from the

kitchens. Such salads! Such vegetables! Such cakes! Wines and liqueurs! A mixture of the most modern American dishes and foods prepared as their ancestors prepared them five hundred years ago.

The party hilariously took their places at the table. The older men talking gravely, religion, philosophy and politics, mostly politics. Sari caught bits of conversation that made her think of her own childhood when her father had gathered the radicals and socialists of his acquaintance around the Harris dinner table. And there was a fat, good-natured looking man who upheld the capitalist system humorously, in the face of a small, wiry, earnest, shabbily dressed person who pounded his fists on the table and shouted something about the working classes.

The older women whispered together and nodded, and discussed Sari. Mrs. De Jonghe exhibited her proudly, and with such a roguish look in her bright eyes, peeping out of her round kitten face, as to make Sari quite happy to be with her. And little Bertram, who had been allowed to come to the party, clung to her hand until he fell asleep on one of the divans, when he was carried off to bed by Cecil.

The younger people, who were much in the minority tried to carry the party with a high hand; to liven it up a bit. Thus Roger arose and told a story, and announced that everyone who didn't tell a story would be obliged to pay a forfeit. Janet being called on next, refused, whereupon Roger collected the forfeit, a long, fervent kiss.

The party broke up about four o'clock, and at five after the last guests had dribbled home, the De Jonghe family seated themselves comfortably in the kitchen for a final cup of coffee. After which they all trailed sleepily off to bed.

V

When the lights were turned out and they lay side by side Sari said: "I guess we can't laugh it off, Cecil."

A long breath came from Cecil. He turned his head restlessly on the pillow. "What makes you think so, dear?"

"I've been looking in books, and things, and I found out that sickness like I've been having is one of the symptoms."

"Gee, Sari, it's going to make it bad."

"Yes," she agreed. "Say Cecil, are you sorry?"

"Sorry?"

"You know, sorry we got married and everything like that."

"How could I be sorry, dear. You see, I love you."

"Cecil, you're sweet. Do you really? In spite of—"

He pulled her to him and spoke against her lips. "Now, more than ever."

Sari drew away from him and said with greater earnestness than she had ever felt in her life before: "Cecil I want to tell you something. I love you, too. I didn't when we were married. I just thought that marriage was going to be a lark—a date every night. And I wasn't at all sure that I'd stay married. I didn't understand about it—"

"Do you think you will now?"

"Understand?"

"No, stay married?"

"Yes, yes, I think so. There's a cock-eyed yarn that mother filled us full of when we were children all about a prince that was going to come and—oh well,

you know. Of course, I saw that was simply cheese, and I thought it didn't matter what you did Now, I sort of get it. I don't mean that I believe in it, but I understand how you could get to feel that way about a man if you were the sort of person who dressed life up in its Sunday clothes—”

“Dear, it's almost morning.”

“Oh, well, then, goodnight, you cock-eyed old thing, if you don't want to hear what I'm talking about—”

“I do, Darling, I'm awfully interested, only it is late!”

“I said goodnight, didn't I?”

His kiss was like a round fat period at the end of a sentence.

“Goodnight.”

“Goodnight.”

CHAPTER VI

I

MR. AND MRS. CECIL HOWE DE JONGHE—(Sari had insisted on the H. standing for something)—came back to their home on Oak street much refreshed in spirits from their winter holiday. Sari breathed a sigh of thankfulness that Cecil's people lived in St. Louis, and Cecil himself settled down contentedly on the train at leaving them, happy that everything was all right at home so he could forget about it.

But an hour after he had parted from Sari on his first night at the theater, he returned, dejected and with the news that some one else had been hired during his absence, and that the manager refused to discharge the interloper.

It was a cold, miserable night, and they looked dispiritedly through the papers, but no one was in need of a moving picture pianist. But for the weather Cecil would have gone out and solicited the managers of neighborhood theaters to try him, but he was suffering with an incipient cold, and Sari refused to let him go.

The next day he began a heart-breaking search for a job. Nearly all the theaters wanted a pipe-organist as well as a pianist, and Cecil's natural talents on the pipe organ would not pass with any of the managers who tried him.

A week went by in which Cecil desperately answered every advertisement he could imagine himself filling in

any capacity. Their money was nearly gone when he got a short job working as a clerk in a January sale of white goods. He made forty-five dollars in ten days' work with his commissions, and came in every night looking paler, thinner, more tired and with his big eyes staring at Sari with the poetic pathos of countenance in which some Jews seem to typify the persecutions of their race.

Forty-five dollars relieved them for the time, but their rent would be due in a week and it was sixty-five dollars.

"Cecil, dear, don't worry about that. It's sure to come out all right."

Cecil, his head in his hands, turned restlessly.

"I shouldn't worry, and you going to be a mother?" He rose, and moved about the room restlessly. "We've got to make the best of things, I suppose. Of course I can ask my dad for money, but—"

"Oh surely Cecil, tomorrow you'll get something—"

Cecil broke down. "Oh baby, I'm no good. No good. Our plans—everything smashed." He threw himself on his knees and buried his head in Sari's lap.

"Oh Cecil, tomorrow, you're bound to get something, bound to, dear, I know you will."

II

The next day Cecil did get something. A small moving picture theater, barely managing to exist on the southwest side in the suburbs offered him twenty dollars a week. The journey back and forth would be three hours each way, but as he made it homeward, there was a faint gleam of happiness in his heart, even

though one of the thick Chicago blizzards delayed him an hour.

It was nearly midnight when he came in. Sari sat up in bed and hugged him.

"You're so warm," murmured Cecil, "So nice and warm. Gee, it's cold out. Well, dear, I got a job."

"Cecil darling, where?"

"Way out south—you know that second 'ad.' Well, an old Dutchman offered me a job. I played for him and he thought I was swell. Course he's no judge of music, but—"

"How much?"

Cecil hesitated. If only there had been some way to augment his income he would have increased it in telling her. But he had to confess "Twenty dollars."

Sari was silent, wondering how they would live on that.

"Maybe, honey, I can get some work to do in the daytime. Some shoe clerk job, or something—"

"But Cecil, when would you sleep. You won't get home before midnight, will you?"

"Midnight? Gee, I wish I would get home at midnight. Do you know it takes three hours to get out there. I'll have to leave here at four, to make it by seven, and the place closes up at eleven-thirty, so I'll get home at exactly two-thirty in the morning."

"Oh Cecil, we'll have to move south, won't we? You can't be making such a long trip."

"Rents are cheaper on the south side. Gosh, I won't get paid for a week, and then the rent will be due here. I wonder if Mr. Tweety will wait a week for the rent."

"Cecil."

"Yes, honey!"

"I've been thinking Cecil that it wouldn't be a bad idea if we went—well—"

"Yes?"

"Well, if we went home and stayed with mother, until, well, until after it came?"

Cecil was thoughtful.

"Do you want to?"

"Well, it would certainly be more comfortable for both of us. And as long as I can't work, I might as well be at home—we wouldn't have any rent to pay, and you could save up your money for doctor bills and things like that. Babies are awfully expensive, I've heard."

"We'd have to pay board," said Cecil. "It wouldn't be right."

"Mother wouldn't take it from us. Cecil, we've got to go some place. We can't stay here and pay this rent. Why sixty-five dollars from eighty dollars leaves only fifteen dollars a month for us to eat on. We can't save any money out of that."

"No?" said Cecil, still with doubt in his voice.

"Of course, I'll look rather foolish going home after I've been so high-handed and everything. But it's really the only sensible thing to do, until after the child arrives! Then I can get a job and we can both be freer."

"It really is the best course to take, I guess," said Cecil, who thought only of Sari's welfare. "It would be best for you to have your mother at a time like that anyway."

"Yes, and then it won't take over three quarters of an hour from our house on the south side."

"I don't think it will even take that long."

III

Luck was with the young De Jonghes in this new venture. Before Sari was up the next morning, and while Cecil was out buying food for breakfast, she was called to the telephone by the musical voiced Tweetie.

"Aow, Messes Di Jung, yow're wunted at the tale phone!"

It was Mrs. Harris, suggesting that Sari meet Ward and her for luncheon downtown.

"I don't feel well," said Sari, "and it's a horribly cold day. Couldn't you and Ward come out here to lunch? You know you can take a taxi and get here in five minutes, and I'll have luncheon all ready for you."

Mrs. Harris demurred at first, but Sari was insistent saying that she particularly wanted to see her mother. Mrs. Harris promised to be there at one with Ward.

After she hung up the receiver Sari remembered with dismay that a company luncheon costs money. She could have asked them to come in the afternoon, she supposed, but Cecil reassured her, saying that it couldn't be helped now, and that it was a chance for her to offer to go home.

"I won't need to offer," said Sari, suddenly sobbing. "I'll be invited as soon as mother finds out."

Cecil soothed her patiently, and tucked her back in bed, saying that he would go out again and do the marketing and get everything ready for the luncheon. He prepared a breakfast and brought it in to her, watching her eat anxiously.

The luncheon passed off smoothly. Sari was chatty

about their trip to St. Louis, Cecil silent. Mrs. Harris watched Sari's strained eyes closely, but it was not until Sari rose suddenly from the table, and bent over the sink, that her mother knew positively why Sari had been ill in the morning.

Later, when Sari was lying on the lounge the offer came that they had decided to accept.

"We will get a taxi and you must come right home with us, now," said Mrs. Harris. "I won't feel right until I know you are safely at home with me."

"Oh, I can't go until tomorrow, anyway, and I shouldn't until the end of the week," protested Sari.

"You'll come now," said her mother firmly.

"Oh, mother, tomorrow. We have so much packing—"

"Ward can do it."

"But I'm perfectly well. It was just a little fit of sickness."

"Yes, but you are liable to have more little fits of sickness from now on. To what doctor have you been?"

"I haven't been to any. Today is practically the first time I've been ill."

"But, but—" Mrs. Harris had thought she was beyond being surprised by this daughter, but this outraged her. "Why don't you know you should be under a doctor's care! I shall call in Dr. Smart as soon as I get you home, tonight."

"Oh, mother, please, please. I'll come the first thing in the morning. I really can't make that long trip today. I can't stand the cold and the trains and the walk through the snow from the station—"

"We'll get a taxi and drive out."

"I'd rather go tomorrow."

"Will you come the first thing, and let Cecil bring you in a taxi?"

"I won't need a taxi, mother. I'll be all right tomorrow. Listen, I know what we can do. Mr. Bixby's mother has a little room at the end of the hall, and as she's out of town Ward can stay there all night, and bring me in the morning!"

"Yes," said Ward, "and then if the slightest thing happens I can call a doctor."

"Cecil takes care of me all right," said Sari, pouting. Cecil smiled at her, eagerly watching her face as he had become accustomed to doing lately.

She could not bear to pass a night away from Cecil.

IV

The next day they arrived at Lakeshore at about two o'clock. Sari went to her old room and began changing her clothes. She was interrupted by a timid knocking on the door.

"Come in," she called. Olive hesitated at the door.

"Glad to see you," said Olive, delightedly. "Real pleased to see you back."

"How are you, Olive," said Sari, carelessly.

"Real well, thank you. It's right lonesome around here with all you girls gone. Miss Nita she's gone off to college, and Miss Dizzy, she's married—no, no, Miss Dizzy, she's gone off to college, that's right."

"Miss Nita is in New York," said Sari.

"Let me see," Olive cogitated. "Yes, that's right. I get you girls all mixed up, sometimes, they's so many of you. Well, I guess I'll have to be gettin' on with my work." She sighed and moved to the door. "Well, I'm glad you're back."

"Thank you," said Sari, taking up a finger nail file.

Olive closed the door, then opened it again and slyly peeped in, grinning across her face. "Misses Sari, mind you have a boy!" She shook her finger playfully, then apparently considered that if this was not Sari's plan she might be giving offense, and added, "Or a girl, I don't care which!" and closed the door.

CHAPTER VII

I

"THE unfortunate thing about my position at present," said Sari, who was sitting in her room, sewing and talking to Ward, "is that I have become the target for the sympathetic friends of mother. They come and relate their experiences to me with the excuse that it helps me. As heroic and symbolic woman about to present the nation with a son all the old hens of Lakeshore who have prophesied that I would end on the streets—"

"Sari!"

"—have become my friends, and have seized the opportunity of telling me exactly how they felt at every moment during the nine months of their experience. I've never said one word to encourage them. Evidently they think I have the most morbid curiosity about all phases of the birth question. That crazy Mrs. de Remy nearly talked me nutty, and finally just to get rid of her and not to seem ungracious I said, 'Oh won't you give me treatments Mrs. de Remy.' She had been hinting that she would like to, you know. And I thought, bless her heart they can't hurt me, let her. Guess what she said, 'All right dear, only won't you try and love more!' Love more? I want to know what she meant, love more."

Sari's surface was changing. Revolt had given place to tolerant amusement in her expression. Her inherent simplicity of character, her talent for individual thinking asserted itself as she dropped her old

characterizations, and became definitely herself. It was not that child-bearing had sobered her, but she had resigned herself to months of quiet waiting. She began to read everything she could find about the development of the foetus, birth, the young child.

She sat with Ward for long hours sewing. A kinship grew out of these silent times that had never before existed between them. Sari began to take Nita's place, imperceptibly in Ward's heart. A spiritual friendship grew up between them almost before either realized it.

Ward talked of Rod to Sari very often. She hardly tried to conceal from Sari that he was constantly on her mind. At first Sari urged Ward to telegraph Rod to come at once, then to write. Why should Ward think of him all the time, and yet do nothing to bring him to her side? Ward even told Sari her fears that perhaps she, too, was becoming like Mary and Helene, seeking consolation in an imaginary affair. When Sari seemed to be turning this version of the question over in her mind, Ward suddenly said, coloring, "Rod did love me. If he didn't then no man ever loved a woman."

Sari was not moved. She still sat thinking. "Ward, do you know there's something I've been thinking about for a long time? I've been turning it over in my mind."

"About me?"

"Yes. It's hard to explain why I feel this. But it seems true to me. And it is that marriage would never do for you. It isn't the solution of life for you."

"But why?"

"I don't know." Sari was on the point of disappearing into a vague manner which she used to close arguments. "It's all right for Nita or even for Dizzy, but

I can't imagine you married. You wouldn't like it, somehow; I can't explain."

"But I have to get married. I feel that I will. You frighten me sort of. I wish you'd say what you mean. I'm rather worried."

"It isn't for you!"

"It all depends on the sort of man you marry." Ward's manner seemed to drop distilled wisdom. "He has to be unselfish, broad, tolerant, and self-controlled, in addition to being clean and honorable and strong."

"You swallow so much of mother's bunk," said Sari. "The real hard knocks simply can't come to you. You're engaged to a man, and because he goes off and leaves you in a huff about something, you just gently pine away upon the stem. You'd just die if you had to go through some of the ordinary things I've gone through without thinking about them. I rather like experiences and hard knocks. I mean, I don't regret anything. I guess I'm vulgar. I'm selfish, too."

Ward flushed. "I don't pretend to be unselfish."

"No, but you try to be. You have the ideal of being unselfish. And it handicaps you, darling. It diffuses your energy somehow."

Ward, uncomprehending returned to the subject.

"I don't know. I want to be married. But I am worried about different things like the sins of the fathers and birth control."

"Yes, I know. Unpleasant truths worry you and confuse you. It's right for you to have lots of men worshipping you—"

"Boys!"

"You never give them anything except a vague sweet breath of unreality, a feeling that life is beautiful and romantic and—"

"That's something, then, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's a lot, of course, but it unfits you for practical life. How can you, for instance, get on a train and go east and find Rod, and ask him whether he loves you or not? At first I thought that was the only decent thing to do when you first told me. It's what I'd do. But now, I see that you can't, and I see why you can't. It's more fitting somehow, that you should poetically pine."

"Would you really do that, Sari?"

"Go after him? Of course I would. If I loved him. I'd go after Cecil, I know that. But maybe I wouldn't if we'd never been married. I didn't love him then like I do now. It was all fun, and I thought if I didn't like him I could easily divorce him—"

II

In June Dizzy returned from Wharton. Her hair was twisted up on her head, and she no longer looked like a little girl. No one thought of her as being only seventeen except her mother. When she put on grown up clothes Dizzy grew up. There was never any patronizing of her—she had no such struggle to assert herself and establish a place for herself in the adult world as Sari had.

She was making preparations to enter summer school at the University of Chicago as a sophomore. She had not only made all her freshman credits at Wharton, but she had made them with good grades. She would enter the University of Chicago in the fall a year and a quarter ahead of her class, and by attending summer school each summer would graduate from college in two more years.

III

Mrs. Harris found a poem by Edgar Guest in a magazine: "It means a lot to be a dad." She clipped it out and took it to Sari, who could use it, she thought, in awakening Cecil to the new joy that was coming to him.

"I'll give it to him," said Sari politely. She looked at Dizzy and they laughed, to the astonishment of Mrs. Harris, who said:

"When I was a little girl and used to play wedding with my dolls I always played that the next day my wedded couple had a baby. That was the proper climax in my mind. To wait for it had no part in my plan of the ideal. And somehow, even yet, notwithstanding all I've learned of the blessedness of anticipation, I find that young brides have to wait too long for that disordering, encumbering, transfiguring first baby!"

Sari rushed from the room. It was the first time she had shown any of her natural fire.

Mrs. Harris raised an eyebrow to indicate to Ward and Dizzy that this was merely one of the phases to months that follow, it is a wonder that many of the be expected in Sari's condition. She continued placidly. "What with the honeymoon, and the long dear young things weather it through until the baby comes to take their minds off themselves and give them an absorbing interest."

"Mother," said Dizzy bluntly, "you ought to have more sense than that. This idea of having babies right and left is sheer nonsense. There is no poetry about it. Do you know that there are more hungry people today than ever before, despite the fact that

for years the workers of the United States have produced vastly more food than was necessary to feed the populace. If we can't feed all the people we now have in this country what is the sense in going on breeding more all the time. The economic struggle is growing more intense all the time. Overproduction of babies is what the capitalists want—”

“Things like that will hardly affect your sister anyway,” said Mrs. Harris.

“They'll affect her a darn sight more than the sweet poetic thoughts you've been springing on her will.”

In Sari and Dizzy opinions amounted to convictions, but at the same time, they assumed that they were living examples of the figure so wise that he knows that he knows nothing. This humility, so hollow that it rang with egotism like the pigskin of a drum thumped with a stick, was polished with a touch of satirical aloofness to things about which they were not at all indifferent. The contemptuous assurance that their ideas were reproachless because they reflected the intellectual mode had drawn them into sisterhood.

IV

Sari and Cecil managed to “weather it through” without the disordering, encumbering, transfiguring baby for a few more weeks, in spite of the really serious fact that the theater where Cecil worked closed its doors and he lost his job. Lakeshore was not as much concerned over this as it might have been if Cecil had been Irish, Chinese, or an Arab. They all knew that Jews have mysterious ways of hauling huge fortunes out of ash cans, and no one felt that Sari really would suffer. In commiserating with each other

over Sari's ill luck in marriage, they always ended by saying, "Well, at any rate, she'll always be well taken care of. Jews certainly know how to get the money."

Cecil showed no signs of this famous Jewish talent. He took a hard, long houred temporary job, clerking. He played for stray dances, accepting small wages as he was not a member of the Musicians' Union; and his soul suffered over accepting money for his wife from Mrs. Harris. Though no one but Sari guessed this. Mrs. Partridge prophesied that he would get all Mrs. Harris' money away from her, as Jews were so shrewd they could take your money away almost without your knowing it.

After two heart-breaking weeks he finally found a place playing the piano in a ten cent store. The wages were slightly better, the hours allowed him to spend his evenings with his wife, and so the last week before the baby came was a happier one for both.

V

On July 7, Tyndall Harris De Jonghe was born.

CHAPTER VIII

I

In October Dizzy was introduced to the social life of the University of Chicago. A few weeks before she was to enter the second quarter of her sophomore year she received a letter from a member of the college woman's club to which Anita and Ward belonged.

Chicago, Illinois.

September Three.

"My Dear Miss Harris:—

"Knowing Nita and Ward so well, I almost said my dear Elizabeth, but decided that you might think me too forward. However, I hope we will soon be friends. The dear old U. has so willed it that I am to be your upper class counselor. That sounds formidable but it is not, really. It is rather difficult for a newcomer to find his, or her, way about the campus, to know where to go and what to do, as well as what not to do. An upper class counselor's duty is to make things easier for freshmen, to make them feel at home, and learn to love the old U. just as ardently as anyone. I am to escort you to Mandel Hall on Registration Day and to do anything I can for you. It would probably be just as well were we to meet before October 1 to get acquainted.

"I should be glad to call on you or to have you call on me if you would prefer. Just drop me a line. I suppose you are as curious about me as I am about

you. I'll tell you what I look like so your mind will be at ease. I look more like a giraffe than anything, owing to my long, long neck. I have the most beautifully curly teeth that you ever saw, but alas! the only curl to my hair is produced by the aid of a curling iron. By the way, my hair is rather mud colorish and my eyes match. I'm middling tall and somewhat 'skinnay' albeit I've gained six pounds this summer. My chief warrant for distinction is my great fondness for giggling and chocolates, as Ward will tell you. Now you see what is to have charge of poor little you until you can care for yourself.

Very sincerely yours,
Helen Marion Barker."

"I must submit to this, I suppose," thought Dizzy to herself, indignantly. "I'm sure I don't know what she can do for me but I'll be civil to her for a day or so.

The author of the letter was half an hour late, and Dizzy had nearly given her up when she appeared breathless and letting out a stream of conversation:

"My dear, I'm sorry to be late. I'm always late. Let me see who your Dean is? Oh, Dean Wallace. She is a tall, stately lady, with the nicest eyes and the dearest voice. You'll just love her. Very much the correct thing, my dear. A perfect picture, too. Sort of first lady of the landscape. We've got to go and register. Come on, you've got to get a slip."

She pulled the outraged Dizzy across the campus, nodding to the football heroes, basketball champions, prom leaders and other famous personages, between her spurts of conversation.

"I was lucky to get you, my dear. I drew some impossible creature's name, but the girl just ahead of

me had your name and I persuaded her to change slips with me, so I could be your upper class counselor, knowing Ward and Nita so well. I was awfully glad to get you for my Freshman."

"I'm not a Freshman," said Dizzy.

"Oh, yes, my dear, I know all about it. You're a perfect wiz. Oh, you'll like it here. It's simply inspiring. Be sure and get Teddy Lynn in English if you possibly can. My dear, he's a perfect wiz. I didn't get him for English I. I got a horrid creature named Mr. Chuz, a grade student. Look out for them. They shove them off on the junior college whenever they can."

II

It was not long before Dizzy extricated herself from the social life at the University. When the members of the club to which Nita and Ward belonged asked her to join, she declined, to the astonishment of the members who were accustomed to look upon their organization as the epitome of the desires of the undergraduate woman. Ward protested and begged her to accept. Enjoying the amazement of everyone, she refused.

"It's really because I haven't the time to waste on those extremely rattle-brained girls. I'm not interested in playing the social game. It might be interesting if it were different from any other snobbish society, but I can see the same self-imposed burden of aristocracy anywhere. I don't care to weigh myself down with the idea that I have a position to maintain as a member of the best club on the campus."

"But it looks like a criticism of us, not to take it."

"Why? It might, if I intended to take some other

club. But I don't. Besides there are plenty of girls at the University who are just as desirable and more so than I, who are, for some silly reason not asked to join a club. I simply throw in whatever weight I have on the side of the girls who can't get in. Any girl who turns a club down raises by a degree the social standing of the girls who can't get in, don't you think?"

Ward did not think so. She felt humiliated, and as if her friends on the campus had been slapped in the face. Girls whose whole ideal was democracy, and who wanted nothing more than to raise the standards of the school, to be branded as snobs! It was too bad of Dizzy. Not that the girls would care, she told Dizzy, but it was a disgrace to the Harris family. Nita writing from New York, thought so, too.

But Dizzy did not join a club.

III

Dizzy's intellectual brilliancy in the classroom attracted one or two inferior masculine intellects. They invited Dizzy out, and argued with her and admired her. The attractive fraternity men of the class who had been Ward's swains let her alone, after her decision not to take a club was made public. She had not enough attraction for them to make them seek her out. Besides she knew very few of them outside her classroom.

Dizzy had grown into a reasonably pretty girl. Her blonde hair, which curled in deep, even waves as if she had just had a fresh marcel, her hazel eyes, which often looked black, gave her an appearance both unusual and fashionable. She was a trifle under medium height with small delicate features and a rose leaf quality in her skin.

Toward the end of the year, she had become acquainted with a youngster who was in her English class. He wrote things that she liked. He admired her very much. They lunched together frequently. But Dizzy was awkward about making it appear that their friendship was purely platonic. The young man had no such notion, but he had not the courage to tell Dizzy so. One warm night they walked down on the beach talking about satire in the Victorian novel. In the moonlight, the young man tried to kiss her. She repulsed him, with a flat feeling. It seemed so banal to her, though such a thing had never happened before. She never saw him again.

IV

In the meantime that year had brought changes for Sari. Cecil had got the offer of a job to go with a vaudeville sketch playing the ukelele and the cornet. The money had been so much better that he had felt that he dare not refuse. Sari had remained at home and he had gone on the road playing Rockford, Racine, Kankakee, and similar towns three nights a week, then jumping to the next town. When he was near enough to Chicago, as when he played Elgin, he came home to see Sari.

In April Mrs. Harris and Ward discovered that Sari was expecting another baby in September. Shortly after, Cecil's act broke up and he came home to make the round of vaudeville agencies and movie houses. He was lucky enough to get a job playing in the Lake-shore movie at twenty-five dollars a week. He also got a short-houred clerical job at the steel mills which paid him fifteen dollars a week.

In June, Nita wrote that she was coming home. She

and Howard had arranged to be married in August. She would buy a few of her things in New York, but most of them she wanted to have Ward help her select.

Mary, Helene and Ward all looked forward with eagerness to her coming, and all planned for her wedding.

V

Nothing of much importance occurred to Nita in New York. She did not even learn that she was not an artist. She sold a number of drawings to advertising firms, and studied fairly hard. She was the center and confident of a number of other girl art students, all of whom were more popular with men than Nita, and all of whom Nita patronized because their affairs had not the pure flavor of her own. She made a fourth on many parties arranged by other girls, but had only one conquest during her stay of nearly two years. That was a pale slender young architect who sent her flowers and whose attentions she accepted because her allowance and income from her work did not buy her as many dinners in first class places as she wanted.

She wrote to Howard every week, and kept a copy of every letter she sent him. He wrote every week, and occasionally oftener. He sent her many pictures of himself, snapshots, sketches, and photographs. All the girls she knew, knew about Howard. They all thought it an ideal match. Nita herself thought so.

CHAPTER IX

I

THE hot days of July waxed uncomfortably for Sari. The pleasant excitement that had attended the birth of Tyndall was absent in the coming of this second child. Lakeshore felt that she really should have restrained herself from having another baby. The first might be excused on the ground of extreme youth, but to have a second! The hope that it would be a girl was the only mitigating ray in the general depression of the neighborhood about Sari.

Nita came home during the last week of the month very smart, with much new baggage and a half dozen New York gowns, requiring to be totally outfitted in lingerie. Ward and Mrs. Harris busily and happily prepared for a shopping festival. Both of them were happy in the thought of outfitting Nita for her nuptials.

Sari had not forgiven Nita for the telegram, though it had furnished her with a pretext for marriage; a fact that neither she nor Cecil realized. So a slight constraint heightened by Sari's open lack of interest in the wedding preparations was apparent between the two, after the first flush of greeting had died.

Dizzy, too, was bored by Nita's simple preparations and shut herself up to study whenever family discussions turned on this subject, which was most of the time.

Nita, herself, was rather flurried, wondering whether, after all, Howard was the right man, yet

knowing all the time that she was going to marry him. A slight breach had taken place between them when he had suggested that she come west to marry him, as his vacation was to be so short that he would be compelled to spend all his time traveling. Nita had written angrily that he had transgressed a law of chivalry that had existed from time immemorial: the prince must fetch his bride.

II

The wedding was to be simple, quiet. With no one outside the family it was to take place in the living room, at noon, and the young married couple were to go on west by an afternoon train.

Nita was secretly agitated about Sari's appearance. She hated the thought that Howard would have to see her. She snobbishly dreaded having him find out that Sari had married a Jew.

"I wish father could have lived to marry me," said Anita, two days before the wedding.

"Father!" said Dizzy. "What do you know of father. You picture him as a doddering old fellow who would go around saying, 'It was on an August day just like this that your mother made me the happiest of men, or it was just twenty-six years ago today that your mother first looked into my eyes and surrendered.' That's the way you picture him, as a sentimental old ass in the best mother tradition!"

"And you picture him as an appendix to the Encyclopedia Britannica."

"He was probably both since he begat both you and Diz," said Sari.

"You think I'm sentimental?" asked Nita.

"Certainly, I do."

"You and Dizzy are the sentimental ones. Dizzy thinks she's going to be the greatest writer of her generation. Sari thinks she'll be something else, heaven knows what. And you sit and talk about it in the most serious way."

"If there was only some way to knock you over the head, Anita, and make you realize that all serious thought is not ridiculous. As long as ideas are old and reliable you are willing to talk about them. But the minute anything comes up that isn't shopworn you begin to jeer and call it queer."

The talk was becoming warm. Nita was irritated.

"Queer ideas are nothing more than soft spots. I hate soft spots. I hate people who are not quite all there. People who do things to disgrace themselves—"

"Do you mean me?" asked Sari.

"Well, Sari, you have disgraced yourself, since you ask me. You have disgraced mother, and I—I feel disgraced."

"Well, I'm glad at any rate that I haven't disgraced Dizzy and Ward," said Sari cheerfully.

"You don't care," went on Nita, bitterly urged by Sari's flippancy. "You don't care that my wedding has to be disgraced by your dirty little Jew—"

"So that's it!" Sari rose to her feet thoroughly angry. "Now I see why you've been so mean ever since I came home."

Dizzy looked at Nita and spoke with an even, insulting accent.

"Nita has no principles herself, so it's obviously on Howard's account that she objects. I'm glad that she has placed Howard in his proper niche. It's only the extremely stupid who are anti-Semitic these days."

"Of course," said Sari. "How stupid I've been not to guess that she's never told Howard Blackton that Cecil is a Jew, and she doesn't want him to find out."

She turned her back on Nita and shivered. "Oh, you snob!" She sent a glance over her shoulder of physical disgust. "Well, you needn't worry. We'll not be here for the wedding."

She left the room.

Dizzy and Nita looked at each other.

"She's absolutely right, Nita. You're a rotten snob."

Nita looking somewhat dashed, put on her kitten-in-the-cream laugh. "I know it. I am a snob. I just can't bear to have Howard know. And yet I suppose I'll have to make the best of it."

"She said she wouldn't be here for the wedding, and I have an idea that she means to keep her word."

"Oh well, where can she go? Of course she'll be here."

III

An hour later Sari came down dressed for the street, with little Tyndall dressed and bonneted.

"Where are you going?" asked Ward, who had been told about Nita's remarks.

"I'm leaving," said Sari cheerfully.

"Oh Sari!"

"What is it?"

"You don't mean, you're really leaving? Leaving home, I mean."

"You said it, kid. I'm leaving the old homestead."

"But darling, you haven't any money. Think! Don't be silly! You can't!"

"Don't be a little fool, Sari," said Dizzy. "Just because Nita proves she's a pig. We've always all known it anyway. This is only one manifestation of the colossal selfishness she's always displayed."

Nita treated, and indeed thought of, this remark as part of Dizzy's queerness. She was very white. "I apologize, Sari. Don't go away."

"Your apology should be to Cecil," said Sari coldly. "You owe me nothing. And if you did, you'd never get a chance to pay it because you'll never see me again."

"Oh Sari, you can't keep your threat to go? In your condition." It was wrung from Nita. The other two waited anxiously for her answer.

She said nothing, only pointed to Cecil who was staggering down the stairs with two heavy bags.

"But Sari, where will you go? You have no money."

"Her dirty little Jew will take care of her," said Cecil.

This bit of melodrama brought the tears to Ward's eyes, and brought satisfaction into the bosom of the De Jonghe family, gilding their departure for Cecil's aunt's.

Ward went to the window and watched them climb into a taxi through her tears. She had grown very close to Sari, closer than she was to Nita. She could not help blaming Nita in her heart. She longed to go with them. She would miss the baby so.

When her mother came home from a meeting of the Woman's club, it was Ward who broke the news to her. Nita had shut herself up in her room, and Dizzy had gone to walk along the lake shore. Mrs. Harris went to bed, sick with fear for Sari's safety, nor did she recover for the wedding.

IV

This event cast a shadow over Nita's wedding.

Mrs. Harris grew worse as the days drew near for the wedding. When a short note came to her from Sari saying that she was all right and would go to a hospital soon, Mrs. Harris rallied spiritually, but her body responded slowly.

And so Nita, in riding away beside the prince, did not divulge to him that his future sons would have Jewish cousins. Before she left her girlhood behind she wrote three resolutions neatly in a little book for her future guidance:

- (1) To say nothing mean about anybody or anything.
- (2) To tell the truth, and avoid even social fibs if possible.
- (3) To be spontaneous. Not self-conscious.
With these she hoped to conquer California.

V

Said Mrs. Harris: "It's a wonderful thing that slips of girls like Nita are always turning their backs on all they've known and learned to trust, and faring forth into a strange land with a strange companion. God only knows how much the world owes to that daring of ignorance, and innocence and love. There's something sublime about it, that going without stopping to question. I couldn't do it now as I did when I was a child like Nita. But I can admire her for doing it. But why did I suffer all that lonesomeness for if not to understand my children?"

The first letter from her caused some excitement even to Dizzy.

"Let's see what Nita has to say and how she likes matrimony," said Ward. "Aren't you anxious to hear?"

"Interested to see if the impressions I have formed of what she will say is correct," said Dizzy. "She'll say that marriage is wonderful and solves most of the social problems or something of the sort. Read and see."

"Dearest Dizzy and Ward:

"I'm as purry and pleased and contented and smug-gish as I can be. I read Mrs. Farmer's 'Boston Cook Book' and consider it a great piece of literature. Howard treats me so much like a real mother treats her first child that I almost catch myself oogly-gooing at him. Won't I be a mess at this rate.

"California is gloriously wonderful. That is, the southern part. It makes Chicago seem like a grizzled, hard old financier who says 'ain't' and makes millions, and Santa Barbara is the Gaby Deslys he spends it on.

"An oil lease is unique and unbromidic, only that they are now so civilized they have lost all talking points. We live right in the foothills with mountains behind. The men look as though any moment they might ask for the next dance. The company is financed by eastern money, and there are Bostonians and New Yorkers all over the place. The oil company buildings are green and white, and the houses are really charming. Ours is like six sun parlors, all French doors, windows and porches, cream walls, black floors, yellow painted furniture and white wicker.

"The ocean is just fifteen miles away and in our one

week at home we went down several times to swim and dance. I drive Howard to work every morning in the car, and then I can spend the day at the beach if I want to. There are many hotels and road houses along the way and so when Ward comes we can play together a lot. The company house, gasoline, gas, electricity, Jap maid service and yard man come free, and the company runs the dining rooms in dining car style. So I haven't a thing to do.

"I liked it last week as I had a few illustrations to send to New York, but I feel that in another week I'll be in Los Angeles looking for some illustrating to do.

"Ward, dear, I believe all the kicking, yearning young things we used to say down on the beach show how mysteriously off the track the unmarried are. They are the problematical, cryptic, uninteresting outfit. I don't see how Shaw and Bennett talked so earnestly with knitted brows over matrimony, if they married old style—unless it is to whet the interest of the thoughtful young. For just get married and the world unkinks, the clouds roll away, and you are all ready to really begin to do something.

"I'm glad I had sense enough to stick to Howard. I feel as if I've done exactly what I'm supposed to do and that life couldn't be anything but jolly and prosperous and stimulating. It should be easy to do with it what one might choose, and it seems impossible to jar any uncongeniality into Howard and me. Write soon, darling, both of you, and let me hear how you are getting along.

Love,

NITA."

"Sickening," ejaculated Dizzy. "What did I tell you? She's incurably sentimental and righteous. She

could never make a mistake and the bourgeois horror of her adventure has been colored by her imagination. She mistakes an automobile and a house with French windows for spiritual setting—the beefish caresses of her Howard for love. Sickening."

"Oh Dizzy," protested Ward. "I think it's wonderful. I really do. It's my idea of real romance."

"Ward," said Dizzy earnestly. "I used to think when I was younger—I did underestimate you to the degree that I would take it for granted that you might think of matrimony as a course, and of eligible people as 'prospects.' But I know now that you are above that sort of thing. I would rather see you an old maid than married as Nita was; to fall 'in love' because it was an easy and pleasant thing to do. Such marriages, draped about with a sense of unreality—a false beauty—have little real love in them. Marriage to regular people is having to marry a specific person. Nita was twenty-two. She began to worry about a husband. Howard Blackton appeared and she took him. So don't be fooled into a sort of sentimental envy for Nita."

CHAPTER X

I

ON Michigan avenue in the ornate apartment of Cecil's aunt little Cecil first heard the sound of motors buzzing by. He would lie in his luxurious bassinet, handed down from one of his black-eyed second cousins, hugging his bottle, black brows bent angrily on the view down the street—he was not sweet-natured like Tyndall,—sniffing the smell of gasoline from the boulevard with marked disgust.

"I love this baby," Sari once told Cecil defiantly. "I didn't want Tyndall a bit and I rather resented him, but everyone was so nice about his coming that I think really at bottom Tyn-tin's coming was rather a satisfaction to me. But this baby, everyone has been so idiotic about it, as if I might have been expected to have one, but that two was too much. As if I could help it. Poor baby!"

"We mustn't have another," said Cecil. "Simply can't. Lord knows how we're going to support this one."

"Cecil dear, it's a rotten mess you're in. If I'd guessed—"

"Oh no. I'm glad. It's only money. That's all."

"I know."

"Not many people who have been married as long as we—still care."

They both firmly believed this. Their love was unique. It had weathered storms hitherto unheard

of. No other young people had ever before faced the poverty, the sneers, the overwhelming and unexpected family life that they had stood up to shoulder to shoulder. Sari was not the wonderful girl to Cecil, the glamourous fairy that she had seemed when he first heard that she was a real actress, but she had become solid and eternal, part of his life, like his mother. To Sari he was no longer a mysterious being. He was just Cecil. Her life with him did not appear like a series of dates. Other men were to flirt with, not Cecil, but still Cecil was something more, her oldest baby, perhaps.

A connection of Cecil's in New Orleans who owned a theater offered Cecil a salary that they could live on down there, playing the piano. So in November of that year, when Tyn-tin was sixteen months and Junior two months they packed up and went South to live. With sadness Sari's family saw them off. Ward and Dizzy were both depressed at the separation. Desolation settled on Mrs. Harris. She wanted to keep Tyn-dal, but they didn't know when they would be back in the north, and they thought the southern climate would be good for him during the winter. He was a delicate child.

In New Orleans they lived adventurously and fell in with a set of artists, writers who confidently expected to become great some day, and meanwhile committed all the absurdities of the fictional Bohemian. Sari's stage ambitions revived and she took to acting in a very inferior little theater, and flirting harmlessly with the men of the crowd. Cecil never objected, never retaliated. He had a theory that jealousy and love weren't compatible. Outwardly at least, he lived up to it. He was devoted to the children.

II

Mrs. Harris, with two daughters gone away, fell into a state of chronic invalidism, from a variety of causes —the most obvious one, her constant fretting. She gave up the greater part of her church activities, and instead of encouraging social groups to form in her house, as she had formerly done, became impatient, even jealous of Ward's friends. She did not want Ward to marry and leave her. Ward, through her sweetness and devotion to her mother almost fell into the position that Helene Partridge occupied in her home.

Sentiment, thoroughly grounded ideas of self-sacrifice, the popular ideal of spreading sunshine were Ward's foot-hold during those days.

And dreams of Rod, hopeless dreams, almost filled in the blank spaces in her dull life. For life was very dull. There were beaux, a few, a couple of faithfuls from her University days, a young man in the neighborhood who wore marvelous and stunning vests, and talked about them most of the time, an occasional new man that she would meet. None of them held her interest. Once her mother had thought of buying a car, and Ward had been drawn to the good-looking, tweed-suited young salesman who brought out a Cadillac coupe that had been used one season. He started an immediate love affair with Ward, progressing swiftly and passionately to an embrace in the back of the car, the first night he took her out. Ward was revolted and outraged, stunned by the manner of it. She experienced a Puritan re-action, and dismissed him.

Dizzy and Ward had little in common. Dizzy studied, came to meals, and disappeared to study. At

intervals she wrote but she never showed her work. In January she entered her fourth year at the University. She had attended summer school steadily, and would take her degree at the end of the next summer quarter. It was during this quarter that she took a course with Robert Herrick and worked as she had never worked before. Worked! Toiled over her study table, walked the floor, left the house and tramped up and down on the walk before the raging winter lake, thinking, trying to turn herself inside out. Now and then she had ecstatic moments of triumph. She was really getting somewhere, she would hug herself and exult. And then again tramp, tramp, tramp by the waters, looking out at the leaden gray, foam tossed body, harried no less than her own soul from the thought that would not come. Perhaps those were the most glorious days of Dizzy's life. And yet she lived them completely alone.

III

Dizzy finished school and got a job almost immediately with the City Press. A trifling, piffling kind of job that irritated her, tired her, mocked at her. She had to haunt the courts and report bits of news, scandal, divorces, suits about property. In the jargon of the reporters she "did" the courts. There was no chance of any writing. She simply set down the facts according to a formula when she was allowed to write them. Often she just telephoned them in to the office.

In Chicago, the City press covers most of the routine news for all of the papers. A staff of reporters detailed to police stations, courts, hospitals, send the

news to the Central office within a few moments of its occurrence. The news is then shot through automatic tubes into every local room in the city. And all the important stories are then given to newspaper reporters to investigate and write about by the city editors. Only occasionally Dizzy saw the thing that she had written in print.

IV

Nita had been married a year by this time. She was happy and faintly patronizing to the rest of her family. She drove her own car, and painted in an amateur way. She hoped to become a contributor to *Life*.

That fall Mrs. Harris became worse. She developed chronic bronchitis, and coughed so alarmingly that they had her examined for tuberculosis of the lungs. She was sound, but the doctor advised her not to spend the winter in Chicago. She was rejoiced to have the opportunity of visiting Nita. It was settled that she was to go to California the first of January.

Nita was now almost twenty-six years old, and had been married about a year and a half. In June she was to present that rising young engineer, Howard Blackton, with a son and heir. The sex a foregone conclusion. Nita did things that way. The girl who was to grow up to be nice and correct and without any of the impractical artistic notions that Nita supposed herself to possess was to come about a year later. Thus they planned.

Ward longed to go too, but Dizzy refused to hear of leaving. She had been promised a job on the *Times* the first of the year, and she considered it the best

paper in the country. Dizzy was barely twenty and her mother would not leave her alone in a city reputed to be as wicked as Chicago. So it was arranged that she and Ward were to take a small apartment in a respectable family hotel on Lincoln park.

And so Mrs. Harris left fairly happy in the prospect of seeing her oldest daughter after a period of almost two years. They rented the house in Lakeshore and dismissed Olive.

"I hate to part with her," said Ward—"because I'm actually getting her trained. She never does anything unless she's told. I've impressed that much on her. When I say, 'Now, wash the dishes, Olive,' she washes the dishes. And she does them well. She's slow, but she's thorough, if you direct her properly. When I say, 'put on the squash, Olive,' she puts on the squash, but she doesn't put on the potatoes, too, unless I say, 'Put on the potatoes, Olive!' And so she's gradually getting to be of service to me. Her's is strictly a one-track mind. She's all right as long as you don't muddle her with two things at once like saying, 'put on the squash and potatoes for dinner.' If there is anything to get mixed she loses her head and mixes it. She's a good soul, though, and I'm fond of her."

Olive found a place much to her liking in the linen room of a South Side hotel, where she received thirty dollars a month in addition to her room, board and the company of the other domestics. She talked of nothing else during the last few days but her new job. She cried on parting with Mrs. Harris and Ward. She had never before worked so long in one place, and if they ever kept house again, they had to take her back, she told them in an astounding burst of consecutive thought.

V.

Sari and Cecil all this time were in New Orleans. But the ill-luck that pursued Cecil caused his relative to sell his theater, and offer Cecil his fare back to Chicago. And so they came about the middle of January, without letting Ward and Dizzy know of their arrival. They were tired of being continually hard up, and wanted to get on their feet before they looked up either his relatives or hers.

Neither of them could get work. Sari's dancing had fallen down so that it would take at least six months of hard practicing before she could hope for a job at her chosen profession. Playing in the movies was the same old story. The places he could get paid too little money to make them worth while.

And then Sari answered one of those enticing ads which may be found in the "Female Help Wanted" section of almost any newspaper in the country, an advertisement which tells about pleasant surroundings, easy work, short hours and good pay. She became a telephone operator, and tried not to go crazy sitting on a stiff backed chair with a continual buzzing in her ears from the apparatus attached to her head, and a continual hum of raucous voices, "Number Pleee-az! I do not underst—yand! Number Pleee-az! You're party does not answer!" Everlastingly, singly, droningly it went on around her, as she said over and over again into the transmitter the set of phrases with which she was allowed to address the telephone subscribers.

This move of Sari drove Cecil to a desperate resolve. If she could do that sort of thing, so could he.

VI

The next morning he hurried out into the street to buy a paper. Without a glance at the headlines he turned to the want ad columns, skipped the advertisements listed under the heads "Salesmen Wanted"—he was not to be deluded by the huge commissions offered by the people who inserted the ads—and went on to "Professions and Trades."

"Production, that's the thing these days. It's what everyone is talking about. And the machinist is the man who is getting the big money."

Much against his natural desires he entered a shop at 11th and Washington streets. Enquiring at the door of the shop as to whom he should ask about employment he was directed to see the foreman of the machine shop, a smaller building around the corner.

He entered the slim, dark, shabby-looking red brick building timidly. "Where's the foreman?" he asked a man who was standing near a desk as he came in the room.

"You're talkin' to him right now."

"I'm looking for a job."

"What kind of work can you do?"

"I'm a screw machine operator."

"Screw machine hand, huh. Well we've got a new 3B-Foster here and if you can run it you get the job."

"I know I can run it," Cecil said.

"Where didja ever work before?"

"Uh ah, in St. Louis."

"All right, here's a card. Go up to the Employment office at the Lowry building and get it filled out and then come back here at six o'clock tonight. We pay seventy-five cents an hour."

"This must be night work," he thought as he went to get his card filled out.

He hurried back in order to be with the babies before Sari set out for work.

"I'm a screw machine hand now, old thing!"

"Go on!"

"Yes, I am. Look here!" He exhibited his card.

"What do you know about handling screw machines?"

"Not a darn thing. But I'm going to get by or bust. I ought to pull down fifty or so a week."

"No?" Sari was not so credulous about salaries as she had been. "How do you get that way?"

"Fact. Now listen. I'm going to work nights, so I can take care of the babies in the daytime and do the housework. Will you be afraid nights alone?"

"Oh Cecil, Cecil, when are things going to start to get better?"

VII

Cecil was at the shop a few minutes before six. Long rows of black dirty looking machines lined the building. Men were taking off their street clothes and replacing them with overalls, aprons, sateen caps. A young man, his head bare, his throat open at the neck and every apparent particle of his skin covered with black, came up to Cecil.

He reached for Cecil's card. "Oh, yeh, you're the new man that Gus said was goin' to run the 3B-Foster. All right come on, I'll show it to you!"

If he had been a dog Cecil's tail would have been between his legs as he followed the young man down an endless line of huge black-looking monsters where

men were already switching on lights and throwing their machines into gear.

Beside the largest and most ominous-looking machine of all they came to a stop.

"Here she is," said the man.

"I never"—he stopped; he had been going to say he had never seen a machine like that before. "—ran a machine just like this one before."

"What the Hell kind did you ever run," the young man wanted to know.

"Well, a different kind."

"You guys make me sick. Coming in here and wanting to be a machinist when you ain't even got a right to be an apprentice. Here I'll show you how it goes!"

With astonishing ease the young man connected the machine to the motor.

"The job's all set up. There's a big contract for gears that we got and we're working the machine day and night. Here, I'll run off a few for you!"

The machine started to hum. A pipe running from the bed of the machine began to pour forth a steady stream of a whitish fluid. "This is the water," said the man. "It keeps the tools from burning up. Here's the cross feed. Start this tool in to shape your gear. Keep your mike on it all . . ." He explained in detail as he went along how the machine was manipulated. After several shiny-looking gears were cut off he turned to Cecil and told him to try it. "I've got to go 'way now."

By midnight, after numerous visits from the foreman and after a huge quantity of steel had been wasted Cecil managed to produce one piece that measured up to all the requirements. The foreman came back. Cecil proudly showed him the fruit of his labor.

"Well, it's half past twelve now so we're goin' out to eat," said the foreman. "We'll have to do something with all this stuff you've scrapped or the day boss will fire you in the morning."

VIII

Night after night Cecil sat before the giant machine. A milky fluid ran smoothly from a pipe on the machine directly above the piece of steel that was being shaped. It cooled the metal as the forming tool pared off thin layers of steel that coiled and writhed upward with a hissing sound. The turret bore down heavily, clumsily, and Cecil steered the drill into the center of the piece of steel. It entered with a grinding noise.

The man at the machine next him was bent. His arms, bare to the shoulders, were covered with a thick varnish of black grease. Under it his muscles were modeled in pitch. From time to time he wiped white drops of water from his forehead with a hurried gesture, as he chanted:

"Every wheel is turnin'
Hotalmighty
Every knocker's knockin'
Hotalmighty
Every tool is cuttin'
Hotalmighty."

He was being paid eight cents for each of the pieces of finished steel that passed the material inspector.

His machine broke down with a sullen noise.

The man exhausted himself in cursing and then sat down on a box near the machine. He got to his feet stiffly and shambled over to Cecil.

"God damn. It'll take these boneheads an hour to fix up that baby and that means two cold bucks out of my pocket. Oh well . . ."

For eleven hours and a half for six nights a week Cecil toiled. In compensation he received a little less than fifty dollars a week.

BOOK THREE

DIZZY



CHAPTER I

I

Dizzy, now thoroughly established as a newspaper woman in the Times office, pursued her days with gusto. Each day, between ten and noon, she sat before a typewriter, racking, transporting, corroding, ravishing her soul, trying to imbue her work with the mordant flush she desired.

The apartment in which she lived with Ward was in the Astor hotel on the edge of the park. Two rooms, complexioned a dun monochrome, looked out on a hueless stone paved alley.

One Sunday afternoon she came from a meeting of Socialists held in the Coliseum. Ward, reading in the windowless, decolorized sitting room, looked up to ask smilingly how the meeting had been.

Dizzy laughed. "Horrible. Why are people so stupid? I remember when I used to say that I could convince any workingman of the value of industrial unionism—now, I'm beginning to think that they won't realize it until it's knocked into them with cannons—even then I wonder if they'll really see. When they begin to get faint glimmerings of socialism the common people are more horrible than ever—

"I thought this afternoon of the time I went to a socialist lecture with father. You remember how I stood up and shouted at the audience: 'You dogs and fools, that's not the place to applaud.' They applauded everything that they shouldn't have, this afternoon. The speaker said, 'The capitalists will find a

way to get you. They got Victor Berger out of the House. They got Eugene V. Debs in prison, and next year they will find a way to have all the Socialist votes stricken out at the polls.' Cheers and wild applause. I felt like prancing like a satyr!"

Ward smiled. She seldom entered into a discussion with Dizzy. As a result their intercourse was very harmonious.

"I can never love any man as much as I do you," said Dizzy after they had finished eating, and were lounging in their little sitting room. "You are like Jennie Gerhart. You are emotionally great. I'm going to make something out of you, yet. With my brains and your beauty, we ought to make a fortune. Perhaps I'll put you on the stage."

Ward smiled calmly. Her poise was never disturbed by Dizzy's spells of being moved. She made a good listener and her sympathetic manner, and her beauty, which had struck Dizzy anew, made her the subject of frequent outbursts like this from her young sister.

"What is the Custard Pie club, Dizzy?" asked Ward. "I hear so much about it? A sort of tough dance hall?"

"Good gracious, no!" said Dizzy. "It's a hotbed of radicals and parlor bolshevists. I've been intending to go and visit it some night. They have meetings every Sunday evening. If you have nothing on, we might go tonight. I'm curious to see it. I might get a little story. I don't suppose I can consider myself a full-fledged reporter until I've kidded the Custard Pies through the public prints."

"I'd rather like to go," said Ward. "Do let's go to-night? Shall we have to take a couple of men? Do they dance?"

"No, I think it's all pure discussion. Nothing as frivolous as dancing."

"But do they serve liquor on the sly? What makes it so bad? Why does everybody shake his head over it?"

"Well, people shake their heads over anything. It's a lot more respectable than some of those road-houses and exclusive clubs if the truth were really known, I haven't any doubt. These people are just harmless little I. W. W.'s whose free discussion of everything pertaining to art, politics and religion has caused a lot of conventional old idiots to hold up their hands in holy horror."

The telephone rang. It was one of Ward's beaux. She had half a dozen who were forever annoying Dizzy by distracting her sister's attention. This young man, being unimportant, was dismissed by Ward in favor of Dizzy's invitation.

"It's wonderful being a reporter lydy," said Dizzy, when Ward was once more back in her place. "I'm really happy now for the first time in my life. I've got real work and you. I feel somehow like a successful man must feel—having a beautiful wife to come home to, to soothe his aesthetic sense and listen to his ideas intelligently.

"In the horrid, hectic, fear-ridden atmosphere of this city that there should be or could be sensation in the touching of a lovely flower is grotesque, ridiculous. Every night, I hear the city outside my window, and it is tumultuous, overwhelming for a second, until I think of you, lying there calm, beautiful. It's almost unbelievable." She mused on for some moments, forming word combinations in her mind that pleased her, and then her thoughts drifted to the office.

"There's a lydy in our office that's a worse vamp

than you are, dear." Dizzy had taken to ornamenting her talk with tid-bits of jargon which she had picked up among the garish intellectuals who wrote for the *Times*. Jim Stein, with a tingent genius for coloring the most sallow stories, bedizened his conversation with what he called "a million different shades, a mil-lion different grotesques." And from him and other reporters, Dizzy had absorbed a pallid slang.

"Really?" asked Ward encouragingly. "How does she excel me?"

"She excels you in weight, for one thing. If she weren't the only other lydy reporter on the staff, and if people might not think that I was jealous of her I'd even say that she was fat. And she's got it all over you in sentiment, too. She's the most sentimental person that I have ever been unfortunate enough to meet.

"Everything is simply wonder-r-r-ful, with a rising crescendo as far as the wonder, and then a fall on the r. Every day is an anniversary with her. I met her in the wash room yesterday, and without a moment's warning she said, 'It was just a year ago today that the most wonder-r-r-ful man in the wor-r-rld took me in his arms and told me that he loved me.' The man is dead, and so my sense of decency made me look sympathetic. But I was outraged. I tell you I was outraged."

She laughed. Ward smiled at the imitation.

"Mr. Burns—you know, Peter Oscar Burns, the literary critic is in love with her. And so is little Georgie Cotton, and a dignified guy that does something to the editorial pages, too. All of them married, except Georgie. Jim Stein told me that the three of them sit and discuss her by the hour.

"Petie Burns is getting in with the New York crit-

ics. He goes down to New York twice a year and they wine him and dine him, and he feels that he's got to keep up his end as a lit'ry bird. And so he'd like to have Pearl for his mistress. I mean, you know, they all have a lot of women—those lit'ry guys in New York, and Petie's only got a wife. Imagine the fool that he'll look in New York with nothing but a wife, if he goes down there to live. Jim Stein says he brought Pearl up from the business office. He's educating her, planning to seduce her. And she's getting all sorts of lit'ry ideas. She reads all the new books and talks about style—”

“Why Dizzy, how terrible! Is she beautiful?”

“Not particularly. She's fat. She's just like any fat girl who takes herself seriously. She oozes dignity and poise and self-possession. Jim Stein is the only one of the four—they are inseparable, you know—who hasn't fallen for her. He says she talks sex to all the men, but keeps them at a distance. And sentimental! She must be about twenty-six but she gushes as if she were ten years younger, slowly, with perfect enunciation, and ponderous assurance. She prefaces every one of her remarks with ‘I feel that—’ Each conversation is a dissertation on her re-actions. Six months ago she lost a sweetheart. She relates her emotional experiences with this man to me. I'm outraged. I'm insulted. But what can I do?”

Ward still smiled. She had never confided any of her emotional experiences to Dizzy and a faint feeling of pity for the unfortunate Pearl who had confided in Dizzy came into her consciousness.

“She insults me with anecdotes like this,” went on Dizzy. “She says, ‘Once the most wonder-r-rful man in the world was away from me. And suddenly I had a feeling that perhaps he might like to read over his

letters to me, and so I sent them to him through the mails. And at the same time he had the same feeling about me. And he sent me my letters. And the packages crossed in the mails. Isn't it wonderful?" "

II

The telephone rang. Ward answered.

"Hello—Yes—Oh how do you do Mr. Glosser—" It was the man of whom Dizzy least approved. Divorced from his wife, approaching forty, partially bald, she might have felt a generous toleration for him. But he was a capitalist. It was too much to overlook.

"My sister?—She doesn't go out very often. She works, you know and she doesn't feel that she can take time off in the evening. No, but she needs rest you see?—I'll ask her, but I can't give you much encouragement. Well, perhaps if you call up next Sunday." Ward turned from the phone.

"Mortimer Glosser says a young man wants to meet you, Dizzy. He's seen you, or heard about you, or something, I didn't quite get it. Anyway the young man's impressed with you, it seems, and Mr. Glosser has asked us both to have dinner with him when he gets back from New York and meet this young man. He's leaving tonight for New York. So I told him to call up when he gets back Sunday and I'd try to persuade you to go."

"You will be entirely unsuccessful," said Dizzy promptly. "Hurry up, it is getting late and we don't want to miss anything down at the Custard Pie Club."

CHAPTER II

I

THE Custard Pie Club may be discovered up Benson's Lane. A row of painted custard pies, wan and sallow, mark the faint green door, dimmed with alley dust and lettered "The Custard Pie Club."

Inside is a big comfortable room with an arrangement at one end that is half bar, half kitchen. Color daubed benches, tables and chairs, are scattered about. The room is cheerfully done in pale blues, greens and yellows in the scheme of a futuristic bathroom. An inferior sort of piano, a long mirror and several small electric stoves are the only other furnishings except a profusion of drawings, newspaper clippings, signed poems and posters that decorate the walls. Prominent among these are several large caricatures, paintings and silhouettes of the genius of the place, one Texas Flynn, Emperor of the parlour Radicals. An exploiter of the abnormal, this genial host takes in the quarters at the door with much humorous cursing, and ungrammatically pits groping poet against struggling artist in the weekly discussions on Sunday evening.

According to a legend by Sherwood Anderson, Texas Flynn arrived out of nowhere—a housepainter with sympathies for the overworked. He took up his quarters in the old garage that afterward became the Custard Pie, and made a home for the sad-eyed hobo whose only dwelling was a park around the corner with the squirrels. Soap box orators were given a pulpit in the retreat of Texas Flynn.

But it was not until Carl Sandburg, Ben Hecht and Anderson began to write it up in the papers, that it became known. Cub reporters began to make its semi-weekly meetings. Tex Flynn never discouraged them. He cracked his whip and exhibited his eager young souls unmercifully for the sarcastic and commercial-minded young newspaper men, who dripped facile sarcasms about the Custard Pies through the press.

People like Mrs. Partridge read and shuddered. But from Evanston to South Chicago, from the Loop to Oak Park the onlookers come in clans, in tribes, in bevvies. A professor of literature at the University of Chicago can be discovered on a Sunday night, sitting with his knees under his chin in the first row; and as the seats graduate upward, perhaps the feet of an ex-convict may be found dangling between those of a plumber and a member of the board of trade.

II

Ward and Dizzy opened the door which resembled a crumpled lettuce leaf. The room was deserted save for three people who lounged around a man taking tickets at the entrance to the hall upstairs. They made their way curiously across the wide room, their attention caught here and there by the signs on the walls, and some of the larger drawings.

Up a narrow dark enclosed staircase they came out at last into a pleasant mosaic of fashionables and tatterdemalions. On the platform a pale girl was reading a poem. Her blonde hair curled in disorder about her face. A loose smoke colored gown, merging into purple, circumfused her like a violet pool.

When she paused and began a new poem, which she

said was called "Ugliness," Dizzy and Ward focused their attentions on her.

"Huddled in the bed in the moments after I wake
Swaddled about with musty covers, meant to keep the damp
dawn out.
My sins come and clamp themselves upon my body
Biting into my flesh like thumb tacks stuck in fantastic design
Upon a drawing board.
Lust starts at my toes and travels upward—
My sweetheart is a conventional young man.
He hates to read a thing like this.
He thinks of my body as a symmetrical sugar bowl
Filled with an emotion like soothing syrup—
Bitterness beats in my arteries because my life has been a round
of trifles,
Or because my lover did not telephone last night as he promised.
Hate grips me for the pattern of the paper on the wall
Or for a possible woman who may take my lover from me."

Dissipated approval melted into a confluence of applause.

A man with hair like broom straws arose and harangued in broken English, unintelligible to Dizzy and Ward. A slender, blue eyed youth with his hair poetically drooping over his eyes answered him. And it appeared that the subject under discussion had veered to the question: Was it really necessary to have men in the human race? The blue eyed youth argued that since woman did all the work of the world and all great men had cribbed their greatness from a wife, sweetheart or mother, all men should be exterminated in babyhood, with the exception of a choice number who should be kept for the purpose of carrying on the race.

"All I gotta say is that men was pretty smart to fool the women all these years if that's the case," a voice from the audience shouted. The youth paid no attention but fixed his eyes on the supernal blue and green ceiling. When he finished his talk, the man with the broom straw hair delivered himself of argu-

ments, inspired by the blue eyed boy. This time Dizzy and Ward were able to make out a complete sentence occasionally.

"Look ad de spinster," he shouted. "De spinster knows how to do widout men—Afder de eggs is hadched de female spinster kills de male spinster—"

Laughs interrupted him as it spirtled to the audience that he meant spider. Individuals squirmed in their seats—a few rose and left. Others moved forward. Another girl had risen to speak. Dizzy and Ward looking toward the platform, gasped and clutched each other. The girl was Sari.

Sari was coming to the defense of man, saving him, as it were, from extinction. Neither Ward nor Dizzy heard her arguments. They were absorbed in wondering, anxious for her to finish, eager to see her, Ward a little ashamed of her conspicuousness, Dizzy amused.

III

They made their way to the front as soon as the meeting was over. Sari, flushed, laughing, in the center of a group, suddenly saw them.

"Ward, oh Ward, I'm glad to see you." She emphasized her speech with her old vividness. "Oh Dizzy." She kissed them enthusiastically.

"Sari, what on earth? What are you doing here? Where is Cecil?" Ward demanded incoherently. "We've missed you horribly! Mother will be so glad I've seen you. How in the world did you get here?"

"Darling, I live here," said Sari. "Cecil and I have two of the cunningest rooms back of the chapel here. Tex Flynn is a darb. He let us have them awfully reasonably. Come on back and see the little patooties.

Cecil is taking care of them. Oh there he is now!" She turned.

In the doorway of the now almost deserted chapel, Cecil, looking a little tired and pale, leaned. He smiled with his old adoring look at Sari, and waved his hand without surprise at the girls. Cecil professed to have a great admiration for the Chinese impassibility and strove always to emulate it.

Sari bounded eagerly across the room, throwing a word to the blue-eyed youth who had talked so eloquently. "Wait, Raleigh, I'll be back. I want you to meet my sisters."

She led Ward and Dizzy through a little dark hallway and into her apartments, which had been decorated in the same color scheme as the Custard Pie and which had much the same sort of artist's debris on the walls. In a corner two small beds were each inhabited by a little De Jonghe. The fascinating Tyndall slept with a chubby fist in his cheek. His father exhibited baby Cecil, pulling back a bit of cover with a touch as light as a fly's wing, while Sari hung over him, holding her breath.

Cecil, olive-skinned and black browed, slept with his long lashes throwing off a sheen against the color in his cheeks.

"Sari! He's a real beauty isn't he? He's almost as big as Tyndall."

"Yes," whispered Sari. "Tin-tin isn't very well, I'm afraid. Oh he's all right, but he's not husky like Junior. Junior is going to be big. Tin-tin's a bit undersized."

"Oh I've missed little Tyndall," said Ward. "I didn't realize how much until now. Isn't he darling? May I come and see him tomorrow?"

"Well, I'm working down at the telephone exchange.

Cecil will be here. He's out of a job just now. But he's going to get something. The doctor won't let him work, just yet. His health broke down in that horrid machine shop."

"Machine shop?"

"Yes. He found he could get fifty dollars a week by working in a shop, and he had to work twelve hours a day, but he couldn't stand it, poor boy. Don't say anything. He feels awful because he's not working, poor old chap. He's been splendid. And I'm a pig to him. But come on, I simply can't stand it here. We're all going out on a party, and I promised Raleigh Minster that I'd bring you, Ward. You will come?"

"But what about the babies," said Ward. "You don't leave them alone, do you?"

"Oh Cecil will stay with them. Come on. I know it's horrible of me to leave him, but I simply can't stand it to stay. And he's so perfectly dear about it."

She rushed over and kissed Cecil, who had been talking to Dizzy in a low tone.

"Don't you want to come out and meet some of the Custard Pies?" whispered Sari to Dizzy. "Ward is coming."

Dizzy agreed enthusiastically. She had been wishing for an opportunity to see some of them closer.

IV

In the basement at North side Turner Hall, the choice spirits of the club gathered around Ward and Dizzy.

Ward sat between the notorious Fat Richmond and Raleigh Minster. Fat Richmond had been in jail for violations of the vagrancy law, and the Mann act. He was a noted leader of the I. W. W. The government

had been on the point of deporting him to Russia for some time. He was middle-aged, Jewish, enormous, with amorous dark eyes and a clear dark skin. His black silky hair abundantly and gracefully outlined his head. He wore soft collars, and lounged in his seat, letting his bulk ooze out over the chair like bread rising over a pan.

On his other side sat his wife, small, slender, prematurely aged, wearing a picture hat and the simple school-girlish dress which she affected. She adored him. Her presence never debarred him from any phase of love-making. She was the trusted member of his harem.

At one corner sat a youth with a delicate pink skin, who played daintily with his food, and looked about with a pensive gaze. Ward thought that he looked as if his hair had been treated to a henna rinse. His eyebrows were partially pulled out, and pencilled; his greenish brilliant eyes had a piercing mystery.

"Who is that?" asked Ward of Raleigh Minster.

"That's Dorian Gray," said Raleigh with a look meant to convey something to her, she felt sure. But as she had never read Dorian Gray, and had forgotten that there was such a book, she supposed that it was the young man's name. On her left Fat Richmond had placed his arms on the back of her chair and was letting his words trickle out like a brook hissing through stones.

"What is it about you that makes all men fall in love with you?"

Ward edging away from a possible physical contact murmured a nonsensical answer. On her other side Raleigh Minster was plying her with attention. She turned to the slender young man to escape Richmond's liquid eye.

Janet Millwright, the girl who had recited the poem, was sitting on the other side of Raleigh at the end of the table.

He rose and delivered a speech about Ward's transcendent beauty, a girl in pink, a former sweetheart, looking rather glum as it progressed. He ended by proposing that they all show her how much they appreciated her by writing their opinion of her on paper and giving it to her. "She is a golden child, a beautiful, who has come among us! Let's show her that we want her in our bunch."

The girl in the pink tam and smock whispered to Janet that Sari's sister would surely get her head turned by all this adulation from the great Raleigh Minster.

A sheet of paper was passed around. Ward, unembarrassed, was bored by what she considered a vulgar performance. She smiled a conventional smile of thanks at everyone, causing the girl in the pink tam to whisper that her smile was a little fixed. No doubt there was some beauty in Ward but it was cold, unemotional.

The paper, when it had gone round the circle, showed no great literary merit, in spite of the inspiration which Raleigh had said they would surely all feel after looking at Ward. The girls reluctantly wrote stupid things, the men extravagant things. Raleigh wrote that he wondered from what exquisite cameo her profile could have been carved. And Fat Richmond simply put himself on record, "I feel myself slipping!"

Dizzy enjoyed it. She was ponderous and solemn about the work the Custard Pies were doing for art and the country. On one side of her was a well known socialist lawyer, who was new to the club. Dizzy liked

him, too. Even Fat Richmond was not objectionable in her eyes, since she knew him to be a well-known radical.

Janet had left St. Louis because she was unhappy over Cecil's cousin Roger. She was studying costume designing and living at "The Seven Arts Club." She went about a good deal with Raleigh Minster.

CHAPTER III

I

THERE was one mail delivery on Sunday at the hotel.

A week later Dizzy bounced into the apartment waving a letter in her hand—

"Hopkins!" she gasped holding out the letter. "Oh Ward, darling!" She flung her arms around Ward, and laughed hysterically into her sister's neck. "Look! Look! Look! Hopkins accepts a story and sends me a personal note! See his signature! The great Hopkins! And look, he thinks I write like a man. He thinks I am a man! He begins My dear Harris! You know he is the only editor in the United States I'd care to write for—"

"Oh Dizzy dear, wouldn't you really rather be on the Saturday Evening Post?"

"Oh Ward, how can you?" said Dizzy. "And just when I'm so happy. See, he sent me a check for twenty-five dollars!"

"Oh!"

"Well?"

"I thought you'd get more!"

"Oh my dear, I don't want more. I'm so glad just to be accepted. Just think. 'The Shadow Scroll,' by E. W. Harris. Oh, we must have a party!"

The telephone rang as if in answer. "Oh Ward, if that is some tiresome man, tell him you're engaged for the day with me."

"But Dizzy, I promised the day to Mr. Glosser,"

said Ward on her way to the phone. Dizzy's elation fell from her suddenly as Ward took up the receiver. What was the good of her triumph with no one to celebrate with her? Ward wasn't really glad. She was just hatefully, coolly, tactfully giving Dizzy the professional interest of a spreader of sunshine.

"Oh Dizzy," said Ward from the phone. "That young man that admired you so is to be with Mr. Glosser. Won't you come along? They want you, not me. They want to have a party for you, a long drive and then dinner in the country some place, will you?"

"A party," said Dizzy, humorously recovering some of her spirits. "It's sent by the gods so I don't dare refuse. I suppose I'll be sorry but I feel just like going out and being foolish, so I guess I will."

And then she remembered that she had a new tub silk sport dress, white with a small lavender figure in it. As she slipped into it she felt very adventurous and frivolous. Today she meant to be triumphantly a girl on a party in order to secretly contrast it with the other personality which she was hugging: E. W. Harris, author.

"It's a date, isn't it?" she said to Ward, looking at her new dress, her happy face in the mirror. "I don't remember ever having one before. I suppose I have but—"

"I wish I could persuade you to go out more. Perhaps you'll like this young Jim Howells."

"I shall—let me see, I shall vamp him. I've always meant to vamp somebody when I had the time, and today I'm just in the mood. Give me some pointers, will you?"

"You silly Dizzy."

"Of course you're too wise to give any away, aren't

you? Never mind, I'm going to watch you, and everything you say to this Mortimer Glosser guy, I shall imitate."

II

"It's a wonderful day isn't it?" asked Jim.

"I beg of you don't be banal," said Dizzy. "This is the first party I've ever been on. I want nothing but party talk. Do something to entertain me."

"The only thing I know is reciting gentle Alice Brown."

"Isn't there anything more exciting than that to do on a party? Don't you realize that this is a party? What do you generally do to make yourself amusing to girls?"

"Oh I don't know, sometimes I propose to them—

"Well then, propose to me. I've never been proposed to."

"With all my heart. Do you accept."

"Of course. Do you think I would lead you on like that and then throw you over?"

"Well then we're engaged." For some reason he was flushing. He had been dreaming of Dizzy for weeks, ever since he had caught sight of her one night at the theater. He intensely admired all that he had heard of her. Then there was something excitingly virginal to him in the thought that she did not go about with men.

"When shall we get married?"

"Tonight, at once, how ungallant of you. Isn't it the tradition that a man always wants to be married one minute after he has been accepted?"

"But we couldn't get a license tonight. I'll get one

the first thing in the morning. And arrange about a minister."

"I prefer a justice of the peace."

"So do I. No fuss. That's one thing I can't understand. A girl . . ." but Dizzy was not listening.

"What a ride! Say, Mr. Glosser, can't you make her go any faster. Stir up a little dust."

"Dust thou art, to dust thou shalt return," was Mr. Glosser's response. About a third of his conversation consisted of quotations, which were called into being by nothing more than the use of a word in one of them by the person with whom he was talking. The color purple always brought forth the remark, "Aha, purple and fine linen!"

Glosser having amiably lived nearly four decades, had acquired a finish, a nicety in affairs of the heart that enabled him to mingle with the other sex, without entangling himself inescapably. Though given to general elusive sentiments concerning home life, a wife, children, some one to understand a man, he was not to be caught.

III

They dined at a country club on the outskirts of the city. Dinner was served in an atmosphere of music and gayety on a wide veranda. They danced between bites of celery, and drinks of ginger ale.

When night had fallen and dinner was almost over, Jim and Dizzy sat watching Ward and Mortimer Glosser dance. A warm intimacy had developed between them out of Dizzy's high spirits and Jim's obvious admiration. "Glosser is a wonder," said Jim. Dizzy liked the way he said it—wondah. His accent

was almost English. "He's making all kinds of money, and he's a prince of a chap, too."

"What an ass," thought Dizzy contemptuously. "Anybody that would think Mortimer Glosser a wonder!" She looked at him curiously and forgot about her contempt in admiring his profile. There was something about his skin, his bright blue eye, flushed with interest in her that held her attention.

They got up to dance. "I suppose this is the sex thrill that I'm feeling," said Dizzy to herself. "Heavens I'll have to be careful. Wouldn't it be ridiculous if I should fall in love with this beautiful bonehead." She laughed.

"What's funny?"

Her eyes met his. "I was just thinking about our married life together."

The muscles of his nose and jaw contracted. Again she was moved.

"We will get married," he said with conviction. "It's no joke," and pressed her body against his in an infinitesimal, but breath-taking caress.

IV

They strolled out into the darkness.

"You know you're human," said Jim. "That's the one thing I was afraid of about you. Mort said that you were so unapproachable; that you never went out. I was afraid you would think me an impossible dunce. Perhaps you do?"

"Of course not," Dizzy found herself saying warmly. You do think just that, said a voice which she snubbed with the sensation of removing a needle in the middle of a phonograph record.

"I'm a dub," went on Jim, "but I certainly admire

'any one with brains. I think its simply wonderful all you've done."

Never before had Dizzy had such whole-hearted adulation. She responded involuntarily.

"You know I'm so happy today because I've just had an acceptance from Hopkins—"

"Oh yes, that fellow they talk about so much. I must get some of his books and read them."

Dizzy was delighted to think he had heard of Hopkins. Perhaps after all she had under-estimated him. "It's just meant everything to me. It's the thing I've hoped for so long."

"That's wonderful," he said earnestly. Here was someone who really cared, Dizzy felt. How could he care, said the voice feebly, but his whole self threw out an enveloping cloud of devotion, choking the voice just as it was starting to jeer at her for revealing her secret happiness.

V

The next day she had just turned in her story when she saw him coming across the local room to her desk. For a moment she did not know him, but was distracted by his handsome appearance. "Some one coming to see the stenographer," she thought to herself. "I wonder why stenographers always know such heavenly looking—" he stopped by her desk and she recognized him.

"Thought I'd like to take you out to lunch," he explained.

"But however did you get in here? Hardly anyone can get into this room without a pass and a guide, and—"

"Oh they let me in. I go everywhere. It's being done in our set this season."

"Being done in our set this season" was one of the phrases he used as murderously as Sari had used "cock-eyed" in the old days, Dizzy was thinking. She couldn't waste a second's time on him.

"I'm too busy to go out," she said.

"Gee, that's a shame. I have a whale of a nerve to come butting in on you this way, though. I hope you'll excuse me."

He looked so disappointed and hurt and apologetic that Dizzy said impulsively. "I'll forget about work and come anyway."

They lunched together in a whirlwind of nonsense, and when they parted she had promised to go to the theater with him.

CHAPTER IV

I

REINED in by the up-raised hand of the policeman at Van Buren and Michigan streets, the crowds, recently discharged from the entombment of the suburban station, breathed a massive impatience to join the throngs on the avenue, tessellated, barred, punctuated with frocks of summer colors.

"Now, Helene, you are not going to fuss about the skirt," said Mrs. Partridge, as the blue-coated arm dropped and the crowd moved forward. "It's going," emphasis lent her a comic mask, "to be wide enough for you to step in!"

"There's Dizzy Harris!"

"Helene! Mrs. Partridge! Good afternoon!"

"You're just the very lady I wanted to see," said Mrs. Partridge on the spur of the moment. "Dear little Dizzy, I know you're always on the look-out for news, and I've just been keeping you in mind."

"Thanks," said Dizzy lamely. "You know—"

"Now this is what you may print if you want to do so: Members of the Lakeshore woman's club object to the card parties that are going on. If the police were to do their duty these parties would be raided." She earnestly stopped to glare at Dizzy. Then continued as if dictating to a stenographer. "Since the year 1845 it has been positively against the law in the state of Illinois to indulge in any game of chance for money. Now I say nothing when the women of my neighborhood play cards. That's their own business.

I think it's a bad business, a gambling business, but I say nothing. When they bring it into my club—a club that is supposed to stand for something in the community—then I object. Then I put myself on record as being opposed to it—”

“That's such a good story I should think your husband would want it,” said Dizzy maliciously.

“Of course my husband could put it in for me,” said Mrs. Partridge who had been trying for three days to persuade him so to humiliate a group of her political rivals in the club. “But I just thought I'd help you out.”

“It's kind of you,” said Dizzy.

“Has Ward heard from any of that old gang lately? Rod Preston, Bill Wicker?” asked Helene.

“Bill Wicker was married the other day. I believe Ward got an announcement or something.”

“I'm sure I pity the girl,” said Mrs. Partridge absently. “Well I'm afraid you girls get awfully lonesome without your mother. You must come out and stay with us for a little touch of the real home atmosphere that I know you must be hungry for.”

“Yes, come this week end,” urged Helene who was eager to ask about Bill Wicker's marriage.

“Yes, do,” said Mrs. Partridge, “I want to hear all about your mother. . . Now about that club business. . .”

“I'll get the details from you when I come out,” said Dizzy. “I'm late for an appointment now. I'll tell Ward you invited us. . .”

“Yes, I'll call you up tonight,” said Helene, as they parted. She followed her mother who resumed: “These skirts which show the contour of the figure are simply indecent. . .”

Helene followed her mother's remarks with silent insulting comments which played a dull accompaniment of the patter she spoke, like the suppressed growl of a caged beast. She was full of a solid, sullen hatred of her mother. And her heart was crying out that she had lost Wicker forever.

II

Helene was now almost thirty-three years old. She had been actively waiting for her mate to come and get her for half the years she had lived. She believed in the existence of this man with the constancy of desperation. If the love legend was false, then indeed had she played an unfortunate, witless part.

In the lonely hours of the night her faith in it was sometimes shaken and she saw herself a spinster through her own ineptitude.

Sex in all its baldness odiously and implacably occupied her fearful mind, so averse from unsugared life, until driven frantic she would shamefully put away erotic thoughts with the palliating belief that she had always been so chaste, so pure that some man would surely desire her. She had long ago ceased to hope for a prince. Any man would do.

Bill Wicker had been her last hope. He had paid her some attention the winter before, because he had chanced to hear that Mrs. Partridge considered him dangerous. At once amused and flattered, he had thought it piquant to give a casual subterranean imitation courtship to her daughter.

Until now, though it had been seven months since she had heard from him, Helene still hoped.

III

Ward spent the following week end with Helene. Dizzy pleaded work and escaped.

At dusk she once more walked the familiar way by the quiet lake. And Helene demanded the details of Bill Wicker's marriage.

"Some wealthy girl, I think," said Ward. "Nita wrote that he wanted Howard to be the best man—"

"He married for money!" Helene quickly said. The thought soothed her sore vanity and fitted with one of her theories. "You know Mary Field is madly in love with him. Poor girl. As if he would look at her. He's paid her almost no attention. Never even taken her out. He used to ask me about her in the most satirical way in the days when we used to be so much together. I used to just die."

They looked across the gray-green and melancholy expanse of lake in silence. Presently Helene began to chant:

"Little blind fish, you are marvelous wise.
Little blind fish open up your blind eyes.
Open your ears while I whisper my wish.
Send me a lover . . . Little blind fish."

She uttered the penultimate sentiment in a husky moving contralto. Ward regarded her earnestness with amazement. "You act as if you believe you could get a lover that way."

"It's sort of interesting. I have a pamphlet that I'll show you. It says you must whisper this ten times on the sea-shore each evening. And raise your hands afterward to the evening star and say, 'I know that my lover is coming. I will to have my lover come.'

Nothing can keep him from me." And then finally he comes. Perhaps you could get Rod back that way."

"Oh I wouldn't try," said Ward hastily.

"Oh well, neither would I try it seriously," said Helene, offended. "Heavens! As if I needed a lover. I've always been too busy keeping them away. Why there was a certain man with a bad reputation whom mother wouldn't let me go around with. And he felt so badly about it that I had to see him regularly. He used to get sort of desperate because he couldn't come out, so I used to go through the Art Institute with him. He had a wonderful appreciation . . ."

She went on and on about Wicker, telling Ward incidents that she already knew under the tissue paper disguise of "this man," "a certain person." It was her policy in relating her secrets to withhold names.

"Do you ever think of Rod any more?" asked Helene.

"I think of him, yes. I have never met anyone that was as wonderful in every way as he. I've met men with more money, more brains, even better looking, but no one that had the understanding, the sympathy, that Rod has. He had everything."

"I knew a man like that," said Helene dreamily, thinking of Wicker.

Ward's heart contracted suddenly with the old fear that she would become like Helene.

IV

Sunday evening as Ward was preparing to leave for the north side, Dizzy telephoned.

"I'm downtown with Jim, and we've just met Mortimer Glosser, and a Mr. Chester. Mort wants us to go for a ride in his car. So bring Helene and meet us after we've had dinner. We're going in to dinner now. Will you come?"

"Yes," said Ward. "One moment until I ask Helene."

"Why do not the young men call for you?" asked Mrs. Partridge assuming the comic, pursed-lipped, spinster aunt characterization of the stage.

"They're all going to dinner," explained Ward. "And it's so far out here that there wouldn't be much of the evening left if we waited for them to drive way out here. It's eight-thirty now."

"A very late unsuitable hour for them to call," said Mrs. Partridge. "If they had really cared for your company this evening, they would have arranged for it sooner."

"You see, I think they only just thought of it now, when they met my sister," said Ward. "Mort has been spending the day with a Mr. Chester, a man I've often heard him speak of. He and Jim both admire him very much because he's such a good business man or something. He's president of the Radium Baking Soda Company, and interested in half a dozen other important things."

"He may be married," said Mrs. Partridge. "Did you ever think of that? Men like nothing better than to take a young girl out and ruin her reputation. You can't be too careful."

"I'm sure he's not married," said Ward. "I don't think that Mortimer Glosser would ask Dizzy and me to go partying with him if he were."

But Mrs. Partridge's protesting tone was one of

consent. She followed the girls to Helene's room and advised them to take the first opportunity of letting the young men know that they weren't in the habit of meeting men on street corners.

CHAPTER V

I

THE early summer night had fallen on Michigan boulevard as the girls came out of the submerged stone station at Van Buren street, and walked up the almost deserted cement channel to the avenue.

Mortimer Glosser's car at the curb let out Jim to welcome them. Dizzy climbed into the front seat beside Mortimer, and Jim squatted in the space between. In back Osbert Chester sat between Ward and Helene. He was a handsome small featured man, past thirty-eight with a splash of gray in the hair around his temples like a dash of talcum powder. He had for both men and women, a magnetism that was not justified by either his brains or ability. This witchery, which had a touch of the woman about it, served him more potently than any art, industry, or good fortune could have done in business and in love. When he spoke, men listened. When he repeated a banal anecdote from vaudeville, men laughed and when he looked at women, they were stirred with a nebulous longing—a feeling that they had missed the romantic, the poetic in life. And they would speak crossly to their own husbands about barbers, tailors—why could not all men look like Oz Chester?

Oz devoted himself to Ward. He talked about himself, with enough reticence concerning other women to touch a sense of mystery and wonder in Ward. He flattered her soundly, warmly, consistently, and with

that careless flippancy which lends an edge, a finish, a kick to words of adulation.

At a road house, north of Chicago, they stopped. On an enclosed terrace down a flight of stairs people were dancing.

As the music stopped three or four pairs of men and women came ungracefully up the stairs. A fat man wheezed up panting like a scrub woman carrying a bucket of water.

"That's Woodgood! You've heard of him. Woodgood shoes, with a chain of cheap stores all over the country?" said Oz to Ward.

"Do you know him?"

"Well, I do, and I don't. You see he married my wife," he raised his brows humorously.

His wife!

"You've been married?"

"When I was twenty. It lasted three years. Then she got tired, and married Woodgood."

"That's not . . . that's not your wife with him?"

"Lord no! That's some cutey girl, I imagine. My former wife is a tall solemn-looking woman now, who goes in for doing good. She heads movements, and carries ice to sick babies in the slums or something, I believe."

Ward did not hear what he said to her for the next half hour. She was keenly disappointed to think that this delightful Oz had been married before. At best then, she could only be second choice, if he had cared about someone else enough to marry her. Her spirits were lowered, her life suddenly dulled, she felt almost sick.

"What's the matter with you, Ward? Come out of it!"

She looked up to find him gazing steadily at her.

She smiled. How dear, and sweet, how kind and thoughtful he was.

As the evening progressed Ward and Oz became more and more engrossed in each other. Dizzy and Jim, too, seemed unconscious that they alone did not make the entire party. Mortimer Glosser, devoting himself to Helene was soon ready to leave.

"The party's just begun," said Oz.

"I suppose I ought to go," said Dizzy doubtfully thinking of her morning's work.

"Nonsense, nonsense," said Oz, and seized the willing Ward for a dance.

After some talking and arguing, Dizzy and Jim, Mortimer and Helene rose to leave, but Oz, flushed and happy after his dance, refused to hear of going home.

"Ward and I will come later," he insisted exuberantly. And Ward, already under his influence, consented.

On the way home in the taxi cab he put his arm around her and kissed her abruptly.

"Well," he said smiling down at her. "What do you think of that?"

"It's wonderful," said Ward.

He moved nearer, enclosed her in his arms and kissed her again and again.

When she reached home, turned the light on to stare at her happy face, she realized in a second of amazed uneasiness that he had not proposed to her. Marriage had not been mentioned.

II

The next morning at eleven he called up and asked her to meet him downtown and lunch with him.

When they had eaten, they walked leisurely among the hurrying noon crowds.

"It's jolly, isn't it," he smiled. "I almost lost you that time."

"It's fun!" Ward beamed. "Every one hates us so for not hurrying too."

"I want to buy you something," said Oz. "Here, let's go in here. What can I get you? Good heavens, I've never bought you a present! What can I give you?"

He pulled her into a jewelry store. Surprised, pleased, she was unable to protest.

"Do you have a wrist watch? How do you like that diamond shaped one? Here let's see that, young fellow."

He would not heed her protests and bought her a watch. She accepted, because she found herself unable to resist him. He wanted to give it, so boyishly, so happily.

"I want to buy you something else. What else can I buy you?"

"Some flowers?" suggested Ward, smiling.

"Oh Lord yes, flowers. Why didn't I think of that before. You like flowers? I'll leave an order for you to have some every day. Let's see, there's a good place up near the Congress."

They found his car and turned up Michigan boulevard to buy the flowers. That wouldn't do. These wouldn't do. Here how about these? All right. Do you like them, Ward? They were back in the machine, driving north in the afternoon sunlight. Happy, white-shod people on the shop-side of the avenue flitted through their absorption in each other like a pastel chorus emphasizing a love scene in the background of a musical show. On the park side there was the gay

holiday air of summer. Tourists wandered on the wide pavements. Motors flew gaily along. From the lake came a soft breeze, pungent now and then with the water freshness reminding them of its blue sheen, off there beyond the park.

They came to the big bridge and looked out over the harbor, during a pause in the traffic.

"A wonderful day."

"Isn't it?"

Their happiness was as big and shimmeringly colorful as the lake, which shone fully revealed off to their right. They were unconscious of the docks beside the river, below and behind them.

"You know I like this old town," said Oz in a burst of enthusiasm.

"I, too, I love it. Especially the lake!"

"Yes, I can't see a town that isn't built on water. Then there's something about Chicago. In summer you can find so many attractive places to have a good time in. Clubs, drives, and hotels, wonderful summer hotels on the lake."

They sped down Michigan Avenue, part of the swiftly changing auto parade—on the wide smooth street. Oak street, a curving yellow mat, stuck with humans in bathing suits, like flies on gummed paper.

"Oh, we must go swimming some day!"

"Oh, we must!"

And so on. Sitting close, two organisms running smoothly in harmony with each other, throbbing rhythmically like the perfect engine beneath them that carried them forward on and on. Happy to exchange the obvious reactions each felt to the summer day. Living in the contact of their eyes.

Sheridan Road.

"Here's the kind of house for us, when we're married," said Oz.

Married. Oh are we going to get married? The question rose to Ward's lips, but she didn't say it. Her face said it, and Oz exclaimed bending over her:

"Ward, you're a wild rose, that's what you are. I didn't know there was anything like you in the world."

The motor hummed. They flew on, past the strollers, past the bathers, past the tennis players, past everybody until they were alone in a hot sweet world, drinking in the cup of warm honey that a kind, amazing fate had put to their lips.

III

After tea they parted reluctantly. Oz had a business engagement for dinner. He began regretting it at four, and complained constantly for three hours, before he left her. "I'll get rid of him as soon as possible and call you up," he said as he left her door.

She sat beside the telephone from eight until ten. When he rang he was already in the lobby of the hotel.

"I'm downstairs: come on out for a walk."

They strolled slowly through the caressing summer night, gala with automobiles which seemed to be entities in themselves, huge iron animals on their way to a party. Popcorn wagons sang on street corners. Girls giggled loudly at passing boys. And into the park men and women were walking two and two, harmoniously, steadily, like the animals going into the ark.

Ward and Oz joined this procession of the saved. They, too, were rescued from damnation since they had found each other.

He kissed her again and again, while she happily gave him her lips.

"I wish I wouldn't kiss you like this Ward, but I can't help it."

How horrid! Why did he wish that? How strained his voice was!

"I certainly am crazy about you," he said, and kissed her again. She clung to him, trying with her whole body to take the wish out of him that he had expressed.

"I wish I could stop kissing you!"

Why? Ward, silently hurt, did not move in his arms.

"We must go back," said Oz. "It's getting late. We shouldn't have come out."

"It's only about eleven."

"Ward, you child! You precious baby!"

He strained her in his arms. Ward trembled. "Perhaps we should go in."

He pushed her away resolutely. "Yes, we should." This sudden business-like tone interrupted the music of the night for Ward like a xylophone chiming in with a violin solo.

It was a sin against the young love that stirred her. She allowed him to lead her home, slightly piqued.

In bed, she lay awake, alternating blissful remembrance with those apprehensions about the princeliness of Oz, which she felt when he told her he had been married and divorced.

IV

Oz left her to call upon a woman who had insisted upon seeing him that night, a Mrs. Marchrose, with whom he had been on intimate terms for a number of years.

CHAPTER VI

I

JANET MILLWRIGHT, whose conversation was a collectanea, fascinated Dizzy. Janet memorized whole passages from books and delivered them in a profound manner. Her literary patter was limitless. She was incapable of sane consecutive thought. Dizzy did not discover this.

Janet was in love with Raleigh Minster, who was a labor agitator. He had become a sort of drawing-room strike fomenter. He lectured before women's clubs, causing angular members to rise from an audience, like wrathful towers appearing over a horizon, and argue such questions as "What is one hundred percent Americanism?"

Very often on pleasant afternoons Janet and Dizzy would tramp along Michigan avenue, staring into shop windows making outrageous hilarious remarks about what they saw, buying each other imaginary wardrobes and earnestly discussing love, sex, capitalism, art, the stage and Raleigh Minster.

Janet was making up her mind to go and live with the young radical. Marriage was outside his code, and, since she had met him, outside hers.

II

Dizzy sat at her desk in the Times office writing. It was just past the time when the reporters' stories for the home edition had to be in, and not yet press

time. So nearly the whole staff lounged idly in the local room waiting for twelve-thirty when they would be released for luncheon.

Dizzy had an ambition to learn the touch system of typewriting and so she let her gaze wander idly about the room and wrote anything that came into her head:

"Jim Stein, notable of the office, lounges over the desk of Beverly Jackson, who is said to be a poet, and who has gained much local fame among the pseudo highbrows, as a defender of the laboring man who frets out his days in the sweatshops of the republic, and whose only playground is the tenement roof. Boo-hoo, weep the sentimental over it, but not Bev. Bev only writes stuff to cause the sentimental to boo-hoo.

"Jim Stein understands it. Jim Stein understands everything that has to do with moods, and class conditions and learning and literature. The reason he understands so much is because he has never been to school. He learned philosophy out of yellow lecture pamphlets for sale at street corner book shops where second hand books bulged out over the counter.

"The rest of the office are low brow. They delight in standing about and cracking jokes. They pull each other's legs, and trip each other up. They love to put coins down on the table, and see who is able to glean the harvest by having heads when all the rest have tails. They love to express their willingness to bet fifty dollars that John Michael O'Malley, or Patrick Flanagan will be the first president of Palestine, or that the latest archbishop to be appointed is a secret dope fiend. They know all sorts of strange things that no one else in the world. . . ."

"Ooh, have you heard the news?" Jim Stein, eyebrows raised deprecatingly, lids drooping, made a half

gesture from his elbow. He drew out "ooh" in a long sigh, more expressive than another man's—"God!"

"Petie Burns is back from New York."

"Oh is he? Did he see Hopkins?"

"I haven't seen him yet. But I'm waiting to see his face when he hears the news about Pearl."

"What news?"

"Pearl and Jones got married last night."

"Jones?"

"The long slim pallid bird with the gold teeth on the copy desk, you know him. The guy with some bilious trouble and big ears, like wings that look as if he's going to flap them and fly away to heaven. Pearl says, he's her ideal man, and Georgie Cotton is weeping down in the wash room, and telling everybody that will listen how he put his head on her lap one night and she said, 'Georgie you appeal to the maternal instinct in me so, and it's simply wonderful!' Harold Smith has gone home to his wife, ill about it. Here she was respectably married last night, and not one of the three had a chance to seduce her. And she learned how to be awful lit'ry from 'em and married some one else."

Georgie Cotton, who spent his leisure hours patronizing the denizens of Lake Forest because they were not literary, and his business hours patronizing the staff of the Times because they were not mentioned in the social register, now came toward them in his amiable and knock-kneed manner.

"Well Dizzy, Petie's back from New York. Wonder if he saw Hopkins. I told him to put in a good word with Hopkins for you."

Dizzy looked scornful.

"You know I discovered this little gal," went on Georgie, "I used to think she was just an ordinary

flapper from the U., but, darn it, she's got brains. Course you know, Dizzy, I don't think you ought to be down in this office working. It's no place for you. You're too . . . well, too darn lyrical to be wasted on a newspaper office."

Dizzy looked more scornful, and would have said something had not Petie Burns, dapper, petite, handsome as a shoe clerk bowed himself into the local room like a star making his first appearance.

"I wanna see Dizzy. Got something to tell Dizzy!"

Jim Stein and Georgie Cotton crowded him eagerly as he addressed himself to Dizzy.

"Yeah. Hot, dusty trip. New York's hot as hell. Yeah, say listen Dizzy Harris, say I can't stay a minute I gotta tell Dizzy something. Say, I pulled off the best thing of my young career on those gay birds in New York.

Dizzy was eagerly attentive.

"Hopkins was a prince. He showed me a wonderful time. Well, the last night he took me out to dinner, 'By the way, Burns,' he said to me. 'By the way—and say, Jim I showed Gotz that play you wrote and he thought it was a riot—Hopkins says to me, 'who's this boy Harris that's sending stuff to me from your office. He's sending me some mighty good stuff!'"

"No," said Dizzy, beside herself with joy. "Did he say that?"

"Yeah, well, I let him rave for a while, just sitting back and saying nothing, and then—" he showed his even white teeth at the recollection—"finally there was a silence. I waited for it, cause I knew I had a good one to spring. So I said, 'This chap Harris is just about the cutest little flapper of a girl reporter that ever worked on the old sheet!' Yeah!"

Dizzy uttered a little cry, drowned out by Georgie

Cotton slapping himself, country fashion, and Jim Stein uttering a long "ooh!"

"It was wonderful," went on Burns. "It knocked Hopkins out of his seat. He thinks he's such a wise owl. Nobody can ever fool him. That's what he thinks. And then being made to look silly by a little girl like Dizzy. Gee, I rubbed it in. I told him all about your beaux, and how I had seen you around town with Mort Glosser and Oz Chester. I give you my word that he just sat there with his mouth open for half an hour straight. . ."

As he recapitulated his triumph, Dizzy's eyes opened wide, and the lower muscles of her face twitched. Georgie and Jim, eager to relate the story of Pearl's marriage, closed the conversation over her head. She stumbled out of the room that the boys might not see that she was crying.

CHAPTER VII

I

WHEN work was done she put on her hat and wandered over into the park. The great romance that Dizzy had always cherished was killed by the revelation that Petie had made to Hopkins. She had wanted to be E. W. Harris, one of the younger writing men of America. She hated women writers with the exception of one or two, conceiving them to be like her mother, sending messages, having missions. It was unbearable to think of being classed among them, by a man like Hopkins.

Not only that. She had appeared before Hopkins in the character of a flapper who spent her time running about from club to restaurant, from dance to dinner party. She, Dizzy Harris, was being thought a frivolous little butterfly girl by the great Hopkins, the only man on the continent whose critical opinion mattered a jot to her. And she had meant to make him accept her as the peer of any American writer. She had meant to match her brains and energy with the best minds in the country behind the masculine E. W. Harris. And now Petie Burns for the sake of making a clever remark at a dinner party had stopped this plan forever. She felt as if she could never write another line. The humiliation seemed to sear deeper and deeper as she remembered Petie's description of her as the cutest little flapper of a girl reporter in the city.

A feeling of fathomless disgust with life, with her,

ambitions, overcame her, and she sank down on a cold stone bench, mindless of the fact that it chilled her. Her hopes, how tawdry, her ambitions, how cheap! After all what did it matter, what did anything matter? What a fool she was to think she could escape from her sex.

It was in this mood that Jim Howells found her. As she saw him approaching it seemed to her that here was a fresh channel for her mind to wander in. In him, she could forget all her past life, which at that moment seemed spoiled, useless and begin all over again as a different Dizzy Harris, as clear and beautiful as an admired person, newly met.

"Well, how are you this evening!" She had long since ceased to notice his banalities. "You look tired!"

"I am tired," she said, drinking in his sympathy as she had never done with anyone before. "I am discouraged, sick, and a dreadful thing has happened."

He was immediately concerned, interested. But when she had told him the cause of her grief, it puzzled him.

"Why should you care? This Hopkins will probably think you're even more clever when he finds out you're a woman."

"That's the horrible part of it. Don't you see? I don't want to be just clever. From now on, how can he ever take my work seriously. The sort of thing I do would be all right coming from a man, but from a woman, a cute little flapper—it would be simply ridiculous, at best only imitative in a clever way. Can't you see how Hopkins will regard anything I send now?"

"No, I can't," said Jim. "If he is as great as you think he is he'll simply judge what you write on its

merits and won't care a hang whether you're a man, woman or child—that's the way I look at it."

"Oh Jim, I feel as if I can't write another line. I never want to see a typewriter again. My whole life seems so hopeless, so senseless."

Jim clasped her hand.

"Forget about it, and marry me, can't you?"

Dizzy looked at him. She saw in his tensed body, his worried face, his anxious eyes that he meant it. There was a long strained silence while they looked at each other.

"You mean you really care about me?" Dizzy asked.

"I guess I've made that plain enough, haven't I!"

Still they both sat in paralyzed silence, stupidly staring. All at once they kissed, began to talk incoherently, brokenly. Both were radiantly, shiningly happy.

"I guess I'm hungry," said Dizzy suddenly.

"Haven't you had your dinner?" he wanted to know anxiously.

"No!"

"Poor child. Well, we'll have to go and hang on the feed bag."

They went off joyously, arm in arm together.

CHAPTER VIII

I

MENTALLY inexpensive! Mentally inexpensive!

It was a phrase that went over and over in Dizzy's mind, idiotically, annoyingly. It first wanted to thrust itself into a story Dizzy was writing a few moments before the deadline, and when she rejected it, it bobbed up again and again. Silly, pseudo-clever kind of thing, Dizzy thought scornfully. But it wouldn't go away.

She met Jim for luncheon afterwards. They sat opposite each other, smiling and absorbed, at a table the size of a ouija board, crowded like checkers in a box among similar tables in the Hotel La Salle Dutch Room.

"I suppose you spent a very busy morning?" said Jim, pushing the large menu away definitely, as he finished ordering. This was his inevitable conversational opening. Dizzy, taking pleasure in the way the words formed themselves on his lips, mysteriously different from the same trite phrases in anyone else's mouth, was unconscious of almost everything but the delicate gold and rose haze in which they were both living. The flush in his cheek, the bright sweet tender look in his eyes, the set of his head, his hand on the table, slim fingered, sensitive, altogether a magnetic kind of hand; these were realities to Dizzy. An inanely conventional conversation took place between them until Jim turned with a more personal interest into something, very dull to Dizzy, about the profits that his

firm had made during the preceding year. He took a paper from his pocket and read her some figures.

"Of course I wouldn't want you to mention any of this," he said apologetically, as if he knew it was unnecessary to tell her this.

Dizzy's dream fabric was ripped with an ugly gash. She realized that he was confiding business secrets in her, expecting her to be interested, thrilled with the glamour of big business, and moreover to excite herself over the possibility of his own commercial success. thought as their eyes met, and he said, boyishly, But her curtain of happiness closed quickly over the abruptly, "Tell me, Dizzy, when shall it be?"

"Oh Jim, a long time, I think. . . And yet it's silly to wait. I don't know. It's such a new idea to me. I haven't told anyone, yet. Not even Ward. And I want to tell her. And then mother must be told, too. I'm rather dreading having people know about it. It's all so warm and safe bottled up between us two. I'm afraid it will disappear in thin air, like some precious perfume, if its diffused among a lot of people."

"It won't disappear unless you change your mind. You know Dizzy, I can't realize it. I can't believe it. Every time I see you, I think she's going to tell me she's changed her mind. She doesn't really mean it. It's all a dream and she's bound to wake up soon to what a duffer I am."

"I don't change my mind very easily. By the way, Jim I'm going to take you over to the Custard Pie Club tonight to meet my sister Sari. You know, I've told you, she lives in the place. . ."

"I'd like to go to that Custard Pie Club, I've heard so much about it. I thought it was pretty wild."

"Not really. Some of the pseudo-Bohemians who hang around talk wildly, but it's not really so very bad.

II

Sari was not in when Dizzy and Jim opened the door of the club that night. There was no meeting but a group lounged in one corner talking about establishing a little theater in the hall upstairs.

A wall-eyed artist stretched at full length on a bench was speaking, "Youse birds is gotta be free if youse want to elevate the drama here. The trouble with all these here little the-ayters is that they've had some wealthy boy backing them, and he wants to run the whole push. See?"

"Hello, Dizzy," called Texas Flynn. "Say we're going to start the swellest little the-ayter upstairs you ever seen. You can write a story about it if you want to. Sari is going to act, and I've got the swellest director—Pat Scovall."

"Big stuff," said a little blond Jewess whose enormous hazel eyes had never left Tex's face. She was very popular with the Custard Pies because it was her invariable remark uttered in heart-felt tones.

Dizzy and Jim took seats while Tex went on to explain the idea. They had the hall there, and the director, and they could get actors. They would be independent of patronage. Original plays were to be given as the Drama workshop had done; they would surpass the Maurice Browne company in putting on new and untried plays.

The entrance of Pat Scovell was the signal for a quarrel to begin between him and a girl with prominent teeth and adenoids who wanted to do Strindberg's "Miss Julie."

"Say, Tex, I've got a swell play on the Irish freedom. It'll knock 'em out of their seats—"

"Play!" said the girl with the adenoids contemptuously. "Rant, you mean. An old mother sitting in her cottage whining about Irish independence, and they bring in one son after another, dead. It's impossible. I couldn't do it. We ought to open with something dramatic like 'Julie.' I know I could do 'Julie' and it's never been done here—"

"Now listen here, Baby honey," said Pat, giving her a few paws on the shoulder. "Julie is too hard to start with. There's nobody could take that man's part. Nobody but me that we could get that would be able to do it."

"You learn it, Pat," urged the girl. "It would be splendid. Oh, I think it would be a wonderful—"

Tex Flynn came over and began talking confidentially to Dizzy.

"Say, this is going to be great stuff, do you know it? Sherwood Anderson's writing a play about me. Say it's going to be the swellest thing you ever seen." He grinned. "You see, the curtain goes up, and there I am sitting, paintin'. See." He grinned and sucked in again, as he turned and decorated the air with an imaginary brush. Jim regarded him with a disgust that was ready to take Jim out of his own conventional armor if the man approached any nearer to Dizzy. "I'm paintin' a house. There I sit, on a board, and the curtain goes up—"

The entrance of Janet Millwright and Raleigh Minster turned his attention fortunately, and Jim who had been sitting like a wary watch dog in a corner, relaxed a little, took a deep breath and showed his discomfort only by a tightening of the muscles of his nostrils.

"Say, Jan, we're going to open with Miss Julie, isn't it splendid?"

Janet came in looking unusually beautiful. Her loveliness was always evanescent, like a stream of pale lavender, revealed unexpectedly in a puff of gray smoke. Raleigh just behind her looked exalted and spiritual. Their love affair was at its apex.

Pat Scovell came over and privately explained to Dizzy that he was going to put on a swell Irish play while the girl with the adenoids proclaimed her intention of doing Miss Julie.

Dizzy looked up to see Cecil standing wistfully in the doorway.

"Oh, I thought you'd gone out," exclaimed Dizzy. She crossed the room with Jim and introduced them.

"Sari's out walking. I guess she'll be back pretty soon. Do you want to see the babies?"

They went upstairs. The baby was asleep, but Tyn-tin, sitting up in his little bed, smiled a sudden, unexpected message of welcome at Dizzy and held out his arms to her. An irresistible gesture that swept Dizzy off her feet in a little gust of admiration and love. She was living emotion for the first time in her life. Jim looked on benevolently, approvingly. He smoked a cigarette with Cecil and exchanged one or two commonplace ideas. In general, he thought Jews ill-mannered tricksters, but he had accepted Cecil unquestioningly as being one of the much talked of "exceptions" on account of his relationship to Dizzy. He and Cecil struck up a real liking for each other. Fundamentally they were the same sort, loyal, sincere, and loving.

Sari came upstairs rushingly. She was exuberant, eager to tell Cecil the details of a flirtatious walk she had been taking with one of the more passionless, esthetic Custard Pies. Jim admired her looks, her

piquancy, her slight resemblance to Dizzy, and if he disapproved of her menage he did not show it in any way.

"Come on downstairs, Janet has written a poem and she is going to read it out loud. Her poems are always fun," said Sari, and precipitously led the way downstairs again. Cecil patiently went back to Tin-tin who howled as the company filed out.

III

Janet had already taken a commanding position and was about to begin as they came into the room.

Pat and the girl with the adenoids still argued in low passionate tones over the first play in which she was to act. Raleigh's eyes were fixed on Janet with intensity, his cheeks were red and his eyes brilliant.

"There were three Jews who kissed me.
I love one of them.
He was my big love—as one speaks of big loves.
He was also a whale of a Jew.
He introduced me to the Jews of his set.
In the deep swells of the red-blood sea of Jewishness
Buffeted between deep-bosomed women, and stringy wild-haired
me,
I was lost.
There were three Jews who kissed me.
I loved one of them."

Jim prepared to laugh amiably at this, though he didn't really think it was very funny, when he saw that the others were all nodding and discussing it seriously. This, then was literature.

"Big stuff," said the blond Jewess earnestly.

"Say I like that, Jan," Raleigh Minster told her. Janet came over and sat down in a chair opposite

Jim and Dizzy. "I'm glad to see you, Dizzy. You haven't been around for an age. What have you been doing with yourself." Dizzy answered at random, and presented Jim, who looked so much like what he was that Janet hardly acknowledged the introduction, and paid no more attention to him in her conversation with Dizzy than if he hadn't been present. He sat silent, watching Dizzy, a line growing and deepening between his brows. He was trying honestly to think it out—think out what it was that Dizzy could find in these people. A kind of vacancy grew behind his eyes as his thoughts bumped up against first one of the notions by which he lived and regulated his conduct and then another.

"You know we've been living in just one room, but it was awful, and so now we've taken a place over on Dearborn, and I'm going to get the meals. You know I've given up school, and I'm helping Raleigh as much as I can. I go down to his office every day. And I feel that his work is of so much real importance. . ."

She must be married to that chap, then, thought Jim. Wonder what business he is in? He didn't approve of women working in general but there were exceptional cases, and he liked the interest she took in her husband's work.

". . . it all goes so slow. But Dizzy, the revolution is coming." She leaned forward and clasped Dizzy's arm enthusiastically. Jim wondered what she meant by the revolution, and why she should be so glad about it. "Raleigh was saying today that the workers are all coming to realize that they never will get anything by the ballot. The ballot! The ballot! That's all you used to hear. But people are beginning to realize. As if we never did anything but sit around to wait for the next election. Agitate, and keep on agitating.

That's where Raleigh is so wonderful, and where I have been able to help him a little bit."

Dizzy compressed her lips and nodded.

"Yes, it's only by fighting that you will get anywhere."

"What do you mean?" Jim broke into the conversation.

"Strike, for one thing," said Dizzy. "Agitate, fight, strike until unjust laws are changed."

"Don't you believe that any just cause can be settled by the ballot? Don't you believe in the will of the people?"

"Oh, the people. They don't have a chance in an election. Surely you understand that. How did the eight hour day come about? Votes? No! The men threatened to strike, struck. And then the politicians passed the law."

Jim settled back, the puzzlement deepening behind his eyes. He couldn't make Dizzy out.

Surely she didn't believe in strikes! He took no more part in the conversation, though several of Janet's remarks were unbelievably different from the set of ideas he had thought were held by all people that were not definitely vicious.

When he told Janet goodby he addressed her as Mrs. Minster, as Raleigh's name had been impressed on his mind.

She colored and corrected him. Dizzy rather haltingly explained to Jim on their way out through the alley that Janet and Raleigh didn't believe in marriage. This sort of thing had a general head in Jim's mind. It came under the classification of "Rottenness."

IV

But he turned once again to the subject of strikes as they walked slowly home.

"What made you say all those things, anyway," he began playfully. "Just to tease me, because you knew I held the opposite views."

This attitude aroused all the original normal Dizzy scorn.

"Certainly not. I was perfectly sincere in everything I said."

"But all that rot about the people not being able to get what they want by voting. Why that's the principle our forefathers fought for. It's what Abraham Lincoln meant when he said that the government of the people by the people and for the people could never perish from the earth."

"Your quotation is inaccurate," said Dizzy. "But I know what you mean. You mean that you think we are living under a democracy."

"Why!" Jim was astounded. "A democracy! Why don't you believe it?" He is unusually naive, even for a capitalist, Dizzy was thinking.

"Of course not."

"Do you mean to tell me that you think that the United States isn't a democratic nation, that we aren't all born free and equal."

"Am I the equal of Pierpont Morgan's daughter? Is the prostitute whom I am liable to be sent down to interview in the Morals court tomorrow morning the equal of the wife of the Mayor?"

Jim winced at the word prostitute on Dizzy's lips. It was the first outburst he had ever heard from her.

"Yes, politically."

"Then why are laws that will benefit the small oligarchy of capitalists always passed, while the plain people trot around like trained dogs at a circus, responding to the whip of a ring master?"

"Because the ordinary people aren't intelligent enough to get up and become ring masters themselves. Nothing holds them back but their own selves. I'm not a capitalist, but if I'm not one some day it will be because I'm not smart enough to go ahead. That's what democracy means. That I'm a free born man, free to vote, free to make my way in the world, free to get to the top if I'm smart enough."

"Yes, you can get to the top on a ladder made of bodies of the people who aren't smart enough," said Dizzy bitterly. "If the plain people are too stupid to discover their own interests, it is because they are deliberately mis-instructed by the capitalists; if they were educated and had an equal chance, perhaps the difference wouldn't show so much. Still I don't know. Here, you are, a slave of the capitalist system, exulting in your bonds. You have been through the training schools of the capitalist system, which have cunningly made you believe that perhaps you will be one of the chosen ones to go up higher. What is the actual percent of the people who do get to the top? They don't all get there you'll admit. Democracy! Why don't you see that a combat in the United States on any question never takes the people into consideration at all. They are the goats, the ones who get what is left, when two wings of the capitalist party split."

Jim bent his head, frowned and concentrated on the enigma of Dizzy's point of view.

"You mean in an election or when some issue like

the league of nations or prohibition is at stake that the people aren't the real judges?"

"Do you think they are?"

"Well, I think their vote is the final determining factor."

Dizzy laughed. "They play exactly the same part as they played in the war. They give themselves unsparingly to a struggle that does not concern them, enlisted and deceived by the actual contestants who remain in a place of safety and enjoy the spoils."

It was too much for Jim. He seized her arm, and said banteringly, "Your little head is just full of ideas, isn't it? Where do you get them all?"

Dizzy walked forward consumed with a more furious anger than she had ever felt in her life.

"It's your sort. The stupid, brainless dupes of the capitalist system who really hold society back today. The capitalists themselves could never do it if they didn't have thousands of young lieutenants like you, eager and hopeful of the spoils."

Jim good-humoredly accepted this. "I believe you're a little bit peeved. What's the difference, anyway? I'm a dub. I admit it, but there are some things that a chap knows. He just knows those things. I'm not half as smart as you are. If I were, I'd be a millionaire. But let's not let it make a difference between us. You don't mind being teased, do you?"

"I do mind being patronized. And your attitude is very patronizing."

"No. You're mistaken. I'd have a whale of a nerve to try to patronize you. I wouldn't even attempt it. I'm only afraid now that you're angry with me, and that you think you've made a huge mistake."

He was so earnest and sincere and lovable that Dizzy's anger melted.

After all the atmosphere was still light with the radiance of new love. They walked on together enjoying the motion of their bodies harmoniously moving arm in arm.

V

But the arguments came up again and again. Jim didn't want Dizzy to go near the Custard Pie club. He had been greatly shocked at Janet. She was unfit to associate with Dizzy. And it happened he had read a play they were opening with. He became inarticulate in attempting to describe it to Dizzy.

"Why, do you know what it's about. It's about a girl who is so—well, I wouldn't like to say what she is, but the situation is so rotten that, I don't know what."

"Oh don't be silly," said Dizzy. "I've read 'Cocaine.' Janet's rehearsing it."

"And you think it's all right?" His tone was fatherly, patronizing, securely righteous.

"Now, look here, that play may not be about the pleasantest things in the world—"

"Pleasantest in the world? I can't believe you've read it. Why, in that play there's a girl that—" he seemed about to rise to a great climax, his face lit up with denunciation, but he fell back weakly on, "well, really, I'd be ashamed to tell you."

This attitude bored Dizzy. "I certainly have read the play. It's about a prostitute who is supporting a dope fiend—"

"Yes," said Jim hastily. "And you think that's all right, do you?"

"Oh all right or all wrong! That isn't the point. I certainly do not object to the material."

VI

And so they quarreled. But their worst disagreements were always on capital and labor.

Jim always contended that the people of real ability and value dominated the country, and always would. Dizzy became more and more bitter, more and more determined to convert him to her point of view, which was that the people of real ability were kept down by an imitation aristocracy which had held dominion ever since property had been the determining factor of the ranks of men.

Neither of them were very happy those days. Jim could be seen walking home from work at night, his hat pushed back on his forehead, in his eyes, a puzzled bewildered, intent look. He digested none of Dizzy's ideas. Here, they collided with a notion about love, there with an idea about duty, morality, or patriotism. His ideas were so neatly and statistically arranged that new ones simply must be emitted or else cause acute discomfort. And the line between his brow would grow deeper and deeper as he thought about it. Over and over, the same old ground, he traveled again and again.

There was Glosser, a capitalist, and not such a bad fellow. He sprang this on Dizzy triumphantly, one afternoon as they walked in Lincoln Park.

"Oh it's not one individual, or group of individuals. Why can't you understand that it's the system that I think is all wrong. The capitalists themselves are just as much victims of it as the industrial slaves are. Don't you see? Politicians, idealists, reformers razzle and titillate the capitalists until they think, honestly enough, that they are the saviors of society, that they govern by divine right—benevolent despots."

"But look here, if you threw out all the property owners, and put the people in power you'd have what you have in Russia."

"Certainly. A soviet, perhaps."

"With a lot of rotten people like that Minster in control; the women of the country would be in a nice fix, wouldn't they?"

"That's nonsense. The notion that women would be treated in an unfair way under a socialistic government is propaganda, capitalists' propaganda, pure and simple."

"You believe in all these things that the Bolsheviks are doing, do you?" He spoke as if he were giving her one more chance to redeem herself.

"I suppose you speak in that tone because you think I ought to disapprove of such things as children being held in common. I don't. I think the notion that any ignorant girl just because she happens by a physical accident to become a mother is capable of the enormous responsibility of training and educating a human being, is simply sentimental rot. The great thing about the Russian government today is that they aren't soft over there. Plato said in his 'Republic' that the first act of a wise government would be to send out into the country all the inhabitants of the city who were more than ten years old. Children would then be unaffected by the habits, the mistakes of their parents."

Jim was shocked deeply. What she had said about motherhood revolted him essentially. He looked at her searchingly, almost heart-broken. Her profile, staring straight ahead, was so pure, so fine, so thoroughly the ideal profile, that he couldn't believe it. He had to reject everything Dizzy was saying.

"You're just a child," he said tenderly. "Just a

baby, after all. You don't know. You'll get over it."

Dizzy turned and looked at him, shaken with scorn, wild with anger. His immaculate grooming struck her afresh in the afternoon sunlight. It was childish of her to care so much about his appearance. Yet how beautiful he was, so clean, so young, so fresh, and that eastern accent!

She could have screamed at the irony of it. That she, Dizzy Harris should have fallen in love with an accent!

"All things considered it would be idiotic for us to continue," she said swiftly. "Our ideas being so utterly opposed, love must degenerate into a third rate farce between us. I am afraid we cannot even remain friends. Youth must find friendship in the cause it serves!"

She turned and walked off swiftly.

"Dizzy, Dizzy!"

She walked on.

CHAPTER IX

I

"MISS ELIZABETH HARRIS, sign here."

"Here's a special for you Dizzy."

Dizzy took Jim's letter, glanced at the envelope with compressed lips, pain-ridden eyes. She crossed the room to the desk, enclosed the unopened letter in an envelope and directed it to Mr. James Peabody Howells.

The telephone rang.

"It's Jim," said Ward.

"Say I'm not in," said Dizzy.

"But Dizzy."

"Say it," commanded Dizzy.

"She isn't in. You'd better call up later."

"He wants to know when you'll be in."

"Say you don't know."

"But Dizzy. . . ."

After the telephone call there was a silence. Ward looked at her sister intently. Dizzy pretended to read. Suddenly Ward saw that Dizzy's eyes were full of tears. "Dizzy, dear!" Her arms went around Dizzy. "Tell me what's wrong."

"Ward, Ward, Ward!" She sobbed for a few moments, left the room, and came back apparently recovered. . . .

"I'm going to New York."

"Oh Dizzy. And what about Jim?"

"It's all off Ward. I am going to forget him. My

book, I'm going to write like mad. And take it to New York."

"Oh Dizzy. It's just a lover's quarrel. Make it up."

Dizzy turned savagely.

"Don't speak to me of it again. It's all over."

Ward's eyes filled with tears. "Excuse me, Dizzy I didn't mean to intrude. But I like Jim so much, and I regret so much my own rashness at twenty. It's been four years now and I haven't forgotten. And Jim is so perfect, you'll never meet another man like him."

"He is dear," said Dizzy, "isn't he dear? You can't blame me for caring about him, can you? He is sweet, isn't he? I mean fine all through, and somehow lovable in spite of"

"In spite of what?"

"Of everything. It's impossible Ward. Wild. Can't you see? Oh, you with your intuitions, and your fine sense of the fitness of things, can't you see? It's the most hilarious joke that fate could play on me, I think—making me fall in love with a Boston accent and a suit of clothes."

"You know it's not that. It's Jim you love. Dear, sweet Jim. I can just see his blue eyes looking after you, loving you, admiring you. Dizzy, you don't realize how lucky you are. What you're throwing away."

"Don't think that. I realize it all—better than you. I realize that it's love, young love, I'm giving up . . . after a fashion. Don't think I don't feel it. Don't think I'm not haunted by Jim's presence all the time. Don't think—but what's the use? It isn't enough for me. I must have a man that I can admire

and respect. I want my lover to be to me what father was to my childhood."

"Like the prince of the fairy tale?"

"No, no, no," said Dizzy violently. "That's the trouble with the damn idiot. He's too much what mother would approve. He's the protagonist of that old story. With nothing more to recommend him but his damn fool hundred per cent American smile."

"Oh Dizzy. When he's such a dear. Just the sort any girl could be proud of!"

"He's moulded, stamped after a pattern. There are millions like him all over the country, all thinking the same silly little thoughts that have been drilled into them by half-witted college professors. I wish I had joined a club at college and gone around more with men of that type. It might have rendered me immune. I wonder. You see, I've never dabbled with thoughts of love, because I was too sophisticatedly disdainful of romancing females. Still I think not. It was Jim, I cared for, the true person underneath everything. You know Ward, there's something there, in Jim. Something underneath his looks and his clothes, and his Boston accent, and even under his stupidity—I don't know what it is. But it's what I love. It's just there. I feel it, and sometimes I've seen glimpses of it in his eyes."

"Yes, Dizzy—don't be annoyed but isn't that the spiritual Jim you mean? It's apart from his body and apart from his mind, something else, something more real, only so intangible—"

"No," said Dizzy veering suddenly. "It's glamour, imagination. I can't help it, can't help feeling things like that about Jim. Like the silly feeling I have just now that I'll never change, that I can't change. When I know I'll forget in a year, in six months. I know its

an immature infatuation based on the mental consciousness of love. The fact that I can't forget him is quite as involuntary as the fact that my hand shook so that I could hardly write his address clearly, just now, at the sight of his dear handwriting."

Always a little ridiculous in her determined reactions, Dizzy had overleaped her own pretensions in her desire to flaunt the love legend.

II

Days later she came in, weary, tired, with a letter of rejection from Hopkins.

"Dizzy, dear, you seem to be getting worse, and worse. I've never seen you so consistently sad!"

Dizzy sighed. "I have been so sure of a gift for writing. And now! Why I have felt this to be the best story so far. A kernel of harsh realism set in a shell of tenuous sophistication—and I know the manner of getting the tale out is unusual."

"It's a shame. It's just spite!" said Ward hotly partisan. Dizzy continued.

"And now this! Just as I need encouragement as I have never needed it before. And the nerve that I have always had is going with every ounce of my individuality!"

"Dizzy darling, it's just nerves! You've been working yourself to death."

"I am beside myself with self pity, Ward. I know it. You ought to go away and leave me. I'm disgusting. But I love to have you pooh-pooh my fears, sitting beside me, looking so lovely, a concrete example of the theory that living is fine. You discredit my horrors, and things, somehow, may balance up."

"It's Jim that's wearing your nerves down, so."

"Life has simply been the raw-edge of hysteria to me for some time. I have been more keenly unhappy than I dreamt in my unhappy childhood even. I remember when things seemed impossible, and they did often, I said to myself, with aged philosophy, 'O well, I'll feel all right tomorrow!' And I did.

"But nowadays I'm not seeing any tomorrows. I suppose it is because the things I want are more bound up with the future. It seems I can't have anything, and I have found more terror and desolation in every day. I wonder if the game is worth the candle. I would find things bearable if only I liked myself. You know I have, with a kind of indulgent and pleased liking. It's funny, I think, though, you may not understand, but I liked my reactions to things! I used to feel very troubled, worried, impatient, about things I didn't like. It was always a physical impatience. I would shrug my shoulder and throw back my head in annoyance. But it was always a hurried annoyance. I think I had a picture of myself hurrying very fast with a big stride, and being annoyed about things. And if I liked myself it was a fleeting liking. But now I am just plain miserable. Something quite static that simply disgusts me when I see it in the glass. And if I am not that, I look sleek, and poised in a hard way to myself."

"Dizzy dear, I know!"

"Way down in my heart I must have thought all the time that I was a chosen one because I can't bear not being able to go on with things as I wanted."

She sat analyzing her suffering with a thin pretense of sophistication. When the keen disappointment of the rejection from Hopkins had passed, she resigned from her job and plunged her energy into the novel she had always meant to write.

III

A certain Mrs. Marchrose, whom Oz had been taking about for a period of about three years, began to make life unpleasant for him. She had originally been a member of the set in which Oz grew up, but had made a very imprudent marriage at an early age, and had separated from her husband about ten years later, after an unhappy time. Since, Oz had been supporting her. Most people suspected it, but she had never been openly snubbed. She was sensitive enough to feel a vague kind of gossip about her wherever she went.

Recently she had been granted a divorce from her husband, and she now wanted Oz to marry her. Oz, who had been comfortable in the relationship that had subsisted between them for three years, had no desire to make her his wife. If he were to consent to any such an upheaval in his well-lined bachelor existence he would want to do something brilliant, like taking a young, beautiful and fascinating girl like Ward, or a woman with a fortune. The social aspect of his marriage would influence him.

So he evaded Mrs. Marchrose, evaded her charmingly, and with an air almost of pursuit. She didn't realize how insecure her position was, and so she turned him out. It was to be a lesson, and to bring him to his senses. He accepted her ultimatum gracefully, and withdrew finally. And then because she was consumed with wrath and wanted to make him suffer, and also because she thought it would steady her social equilibrium, she married another man, a very wealthy man who had always wanted her.

So Oz was free, as free as Ward had always fancied

him to be. Free to hang by slender golden threads to her chariot of romance. He proposed to her beautifully, bought her a gorgeous ring, and she reached her zenith of happiness.

BOOK FOUR

WARD



CHAPTER I

I

LITTLE tables nestled in snug booths lighted by small shaded lights. In the center of the dance floor the fountain was illuminated by dull blue globes that threw shadows on the figures swaying in the dim light to the languorous, passion stirring strains of the best jazz orchestra on the south side.

Oz was taking Ward there to dance for the first time; Ward with her happy excited face and the new ring on the third finger of her left hand. With them was his nephew, young John Greenleaf Jupp, and a girl with whom he was evidently infatuated named Miss Fluke. He had explained hurriedly to the slightly vexed Oz that she respectably worked in a State street store.

Miss Fluke was tiny without being dainty. Well manicured coarse hands, a large pored skin, humpy locks that had been ironed into frizzles, teeth protruding through thick red lips, Miss Fluke had eyes that held a sex challenge for every man, and she turned on her conversation as one turns water out of a tap.

"Oh, Mr. Chester. How's Mr. Osbert Chester this evening? Does your mother know you're out Mr. Chester? Don't you dare to try to kiss me Mr. Chester. Good evening Mr. Jupp. Watch out Mr. Jupp or I'll flirt with you Mr. Jupp, and then what will you do, Mr. John Greenleaf Jupp?"

But Miss Fluke favored Oz with oblique glances even when she was in the midst of turning her shower

of phrases on the unimportant nephew. These side-long looks were returned with much interest though Oz kept a wary eye on Ward.

But tonight Ward was quite blind. She sat there almost silent, happy to be with him, enjoying the subdued lights, the music, the joyousness of the crowd. Happy because they were engaged at last and now no one could ever take him away from her, and proud but a little contemptuous that Miss Fluke could not control her admiration for him.

This place where Oz had brought Ward was one of those curious resorts where almost every group becomes exhilarated after absorbing a number of the soft drinks offered by the management.

On a little platform a few feet away sat a well fed man who was perhaps fifty. Exuberance was showing in him to a point never before observed in a man who has been imbibing lemon phosphates exclusively. The man experienced difficulty in remaining seated between dances, and was continually falling off of his chair, a performance that he explained largely to the people in the cafe was due to the fact that he was not used to sitting on a platform.

The music blared. It was Ward's turn to dance with Mr. John Greenleaf Jupp. Willowy and clammy, Mr. Jupp wore his blonde oily hair long, and it brushed Ward's cheek as he leaned over her, holding her close in the dance and staring deeply into her eyes, whenever she looked at him. She was uncomfortable, and failed to notice that Oz held his twittering partner tight against him. When the dance was over Miss Fluke drew herself closer in his arms and gazed into his eyes with the look of a woman in the grip of passion before they rejoined Ward and Mr. Jupp.

"Here we are again, Mr. Chester," she said as they

sat down. "How is Mr. Chester this evening? You're a handsome thing, Mr. Chester, but I suspect that you are rather a naughty thing, Mr. Chester. You can't deny it, Mr. Chester. You're rather naughty. You know you are."

The boy took some dice out of his pocket and began to shake them idly on the table.

"Oh the darling little dice, Mr. Jupp. Oh the cunning little dice. Oh the naughty Johnny Jupp with the adorable little dice. Oh we'll have to look out for him. We'll have to look out for Mr. John Greenleaf Jupp."

A die dropped on the floor. Stooping to search for it, Oz rested one hand on Miss Fluke's knee. But the die was not to be found. Ward looked, Miss Fluke looked, even Mr. John Greenleaf Jupp languidly assisted, but it seemed to be gone.

The gentleman at the next table who had been having so much trouble in remaining seated volunteered his aid in the search for the die. They moved the tables out. The muddled gentleman became earnest in his efforts to recover the lost die. Oz hustled Ward off to dance with Mr. Jupp while they hunted.

The inebriated man found the die.

"Le's shake," he offered.

When Ward returned there was a bill on the table. Oz lost. Another dollar went into the pot. The man shook. He turned up seven. Another dollar went in. Oz shook and won. His dollar disappeared. The man won. Another dollar disappeared. Ten dollars in the pot again. A crowd gathered around the table. Some one said they might be put out for gambling. Oz lost, the man lost. Oz won, the man won. Always the ten-spot remained in the center.

Ward prayed to have the game stopped. "Dear God, make Oz win," was her direct appeal. There were fifteen dollars in the pot. Her wish was granted. Oz pocketed the money.

The man ordered drinks for the crowd. He was Solomon Goldberg, proprietor of the "Gold Garden," one of the newest and most expensive hotels in the city, overlooking the lake.

Miss Fluke gave him a profound glance. His oriental eyes flashed back at her out of his shiny, brown, fat face. "You're the little girl for me," he said, and when the music started again, she danced off with him. In the middle of the floor he sat down and proclaimed that he was only a paper doll.

"I'm giving you a song with gestures," he said, as Miss Fluke assisted him to his feet. "And here's the very best little paper doll baby in the flock." He swooped Miss Fluke into his arms and kissed her. They walked back to the tables and sat down. Goldberg deserted the man and girl at his table and planted himself down beside Miss Fluke.

"Le's shake again," he suggested to Oz. But Ward interposed. "No, no, it's time for us to go home. It's getting awfully late, and we all have to go now."

"Le's shake just once," pleaded Goldberg, "and if you're man wins he can roll you home in a taxi."

"Yes, and if I lose, she can walk, I suppose," said Oz sarcastically. "It's only about eight miles."

"Aw, you gotta shake, just once," begged Goldberg. They shook.

Oz again won.

Goldberg took Miss Fluke home, Johnnie Jupp went off by himself, thinking of various dismal forms of suicide.

II

In the taxi Oz took Ward in his arms and kissed her again, and again. He wanted her soon, soon, soon, he said. He couldn't wait much longer.

"Mother thinks I ought to come to California to marry. She's taken a darling house, she says. It would be wonderful for a small wedding."

"All that long trip! My God, why not go down town in a few days and get a license and have it over without fuss. Then go to California on our wedding trip?"

Ward almost promised. But a trifling thing upset her. After he left her that night she sat up until four, painstakingly copying a long poem which appealed to her. She mailed it, and when she saw him the next day she found he had not read it. And as she was brooding over the inexplicable lack of love shown in this, there came, of all things, a letter from Rod.

It was a long, hesitating, explaining love letter. He had never forgotten her, never ceased to think of her. For four years she had been alive in his dreams. He had been called away by a telegram saying his father was dying, and had found that his place at home would not admit a wife at present. The necessity of taking over his father's affairs, which were in bad shape so that his younger sisters might have money for school, and college, had immediately confronted him.

During the first bitter year he had not written because he had persuaded himself that Ward did not care. Why had she called up Bill Wicker, when their engagement was so very new. With the passing of months he had come to believe that there was some explanation. He was not asking for it. He was hum-

bly, apologetically asking her to overlook the way he had left. It seemed to him very nearly inexcusable.

Now, he went on to say, things were clearing up financially. All the debts were paid off. The business was good, and he was ready to marry. He ended by begging to be allowed to come to Chicago to see her.

The beauty of it. The sheer wonder of his loving her like that for four years without a sign. The mystic bond had been between them all the time. He was suddenly there in the room with her, young, ardent, dominating, arresting. Oz looked shrunken beside him, old, a caricature of the boy he wanted to appear.

That night in a fit of temper she gave Oz back his ring and told him about Rod. They quarreled hotly, and melted into each other's arms at the end.

In retrospect the whole affair annoyed Oz. He hated being moved emotionally. He wanted to settle down to a comfortable married life, or else be allowed to go back to the unbound existence he had led before he met Ward.

III

One day Oz, passing through the store where Miss Fluke worked, stopped to talk to her. She was looking more prosperous in some mysterious way. He couldn't tell just how. Perhaps she was being better fed. She clung to him with her eyes as a wet cat clings to a post in the lake.

"Will you lunch with me," he asked her.

"Oh the dreadful Mr. Osbert Chester. The naughty Mr. Osbert Chester with the pretty little girl who loves him so," twittered Miss Fluke, her normally raw complexion becoming like a piece of uncooked steak in

her delight at seeing him. "How is the dear little thing? I thought she was just one of the most charming girls I had ever met."

Oz leaned over the counter. "Will you have luncheon with me?"

Miss Fluke accepted Oz.

She was flattering and satisfying to his vanity after Ward's exactions. He wasn't sure that he cared to have anyone make as many demands on him as Ward had been making.

When he helped Miss Fluke on with her coat he noticed that it was exquisite in texture and lined with the softest silk. He held it in his hands for a few moments while she stood looking up at him over her shoulder.

"Hurry up," he chided her. "I'm not getting any pleasure out of standing here holding this coat."

She flung him a saucy glance that subtly imparted a tinge of repartee to their banalities. "Well, I assure you that I'm not getting any pleasure out of it," she responded.

"Won't you come and see poor lonely little me, sometime?" Miss Fluke asked as they were parting. Oz thought he might. She was staying at the Gold Garden.

He did call on her, after Ward had been particularly unreasonable.

Miss Fluke was sincerely attracted to him, though by no means blind to his money. She had a small but luxurious apartment, and a store of excellent liquor.

And so, Oz contracted another intimacy which began to run neck and neck with Ward's great romance.

CHAPTER II

I

WARD met Oz for luncheon at the Congress Hotel. Afterward he had an engagement with a business acquaintance—a man named Piper, whom he brought up and introduced.

Piper was small, nervous, enthusiastic. He varied in temperament, but not in type from Oz, Mortimer Glosser, Jim Howells, all the business men Ward had been meeting. He did not have much to say to Ward, but addressed himself to Oz almost exclusively.

"Come on out to the apartment and get a drink, Oz," he urged. "Come on, both of you. We can talk matters over, and I have a collection of camera studies you must see."

"All right," said Oz. "Fine! Come on Ward, you have nothing to do."

Ward assented with her usual docility. They climbed into Piper's roadster and started south. The two men talked business. The sky hung like a grimy wet sheet between the buildings, dripping incessantly upon the scrambling populace. She sighed and whimsically fancied herself Oz's neglected wife. The men talked on and on, ignoring her.

They left the car in front of some bachelor apartments of red brick.

II

"My girl must have left some of her clothes here." Piper picked up a white silk undervest and a pink satin garter, as he led Oz and Ward through his apartment on the way to the bar he had in his kitchen. "Maybe she's still here." He pushed the door into his camera studio open. "Well, here's the little sweetie in here. Get fixed up pretty, dear. I want Chester to see that I've got the nicest girl in town. And he's got some Jane with him himself. Hurry up, and I'll mix you a drink while you're powdering your nose."

A girl, small, blonde, delicate, came out of the studio.

"I want you folks to meet my little Clarice, the best little scout and pal that a man ever had. This is Mr. Chester. I brought him out to the flat for a good time, and incidentally to do a little business. And this is—Miss Fluke, isn't it?"

"Miss Harris," murmured Ward, inclining her head. She had heard the name Fluke indistinctly and attached no importance to it.

It was evident that Piper was anxious to please Oz. He began mixing drinks. His collection of camera studies—mostly beautiful nudes of the girl Clarice, were proudly shown. They were having their third drink when the telephone rang.

Piper answered. As the three sat conversing and drinking, fragments of conversation floated in to them. "All right, Thursday." He laughed. "Oh no, there's no danger of that."

Clarice's face coloured with passion. "No danger,"

she said when he came from the phone. "No. There's no danger of my being here."

Her angry tone roused an ugly mood in Piper.

"What do you think of her, Chester?" he said. "Your little pal wouldn't go back on you like this would she? She doesn't get sore every time you plan a little sport, does she? The other night we were sitting here, right on that davenport, the two of us. She was being nice to me, and we were having a good time. 'Want you to go out with other girls all you want to,' she said to me, just as sweet as could be, but whenever I try to do that little thing, she raises the devil."

The girl's pale face had flushed as she listened to him.

She turned to Ward and Oz. "Now listen to my side of it. When I want to go out with another man, I can't. That's the end of it. He won't let me. But when he wants to bring a girl up here, I have to get out. Where can I go? I have no place to go, and nothing to do."

"Plenty of places you can go," sneered Piper. "Do you want to go back where I found you?"

The remark seemed to shoot into the girl's heart. She subsided at once. Her manner become conciliating and humble. Suddenly she began to cry and rushed from the room. Piper turned to his guests and said ill-naturedly:

"I took her out of that life, and this is the way she repays me. Hell. I like the kid. Damn it, I'm good to her. She'd have been dead by this time if I hadn't got her. Every time I want to have a little fun she gets sore. I give her everything she wants."

"Except love," said Ward, who had not been unmoved.

"I don't want her to love me," said Piper furiously.

"I might as well be married to her. I want her to let me alone. I want her to be loving when I want her, and to get out when I don't. Damned if she can sulk in there. She's got to come out and make herself agreeable. That's what I keep her for."

III

They left a few minutes later. Oz called a taxi and they rode home in silence. Ward seething inwardly was outwardly cold with him for taking her into a situation like that. What sort of a girl did he take her for, she asked herself dramatically, and enlarged on this theme in furious silent paragraphs as they rode homeward. Oz, in a corner, said nothing and seemed absorbed in his own thoughts.

At her hotel he endeavored to bid her a polite adieu, but her emotions were demanding some sort of an outlet. He was afraid to walk off as he wanted to, and so followed her up to the apartment with a very much assumed air of nonchalance.

"What I am interested in," he said pulling off his cream-colored buckskin gloves with a leisurely social, bantering air, "is this small town guy of yours? When is he coming and why is he coming and who the devil is he?"

"Oh he's just the man I'll probably marry," said Ward, with ill-suppressed venom behind her tones.

"Well," said Oz, laying his stick across the table carefully, and feeling for a cigarette, "in that case you'd probably better turn him over to me. I'll educate him for you. He can stay in my apartment while he's here in town, and I'll see that no harm befalls him. I give you my word that I will take a passionate, fatherly interest in him."

Ward had not removed her wraps. She had taken a straight chair. She leaned forward with an uncontrolled awkward movement. In her face anger had given place to a sweetness of expression which did not conceal the grief she felt at Oz's flippancy.

"He isn't so desperately young as all that."

"I suppose not, I suppose not." Oz waved his hand lightly. "It's not the years that count. It's the experience. I live in the city. He lives in the country.

"I'm sure I could give him some very good pointers. I could see that he keeps to the street car lines in his wanderings for instance. We certainly wouldn't want to lose our little village wild flower."

Ward was gaining control of herself. "You don't take my affairs seriously at all."

"Oh, but I do! I do! You are mistaken, my dear, I do! Here I am ready and willing to show your young friend the town. In fact, I'll even go along on the wedding tour. I'll lend you my car and we can run down to New Orleans or some place. I can at least show you where the good places to eat are along the way."

"You are ridiculous," said Ward, without humor. "He knows the country as well as you do, probably. He took a walking trip once from Chicago to Nashville."

"There you are! That's why I ought to go along. I wouldn't make you walk. I've got a regular kind of a trip planned for you—a motor trip. But I wouldn't consider it safe for you to go alone with that boy. Running around the country with a child like that almost anything might happen to you—"

"How awful you are!" said Ward. He was forcing her against her will into an interest in the subject he

had selected. "I shouldn't let you talk to me about him in this way."

"Oh you don't care about him, you know you don't care about him?"

"Don't you want me to care about him?"

Oz rose and took up his stick. "Really, that's your own affair," he said. He had successfully diverted her mind from the incident in Piper's room. Wisdom told him he had better go.

"You are the most self-absorbed person I've ever seen!"

"Really, Ward, you are hard on me. You turn me down, and engage yourself to another man, and then upbraid me because I am not joyful about it."

"You are joyful!"

"No, I'm not!" He laid down his stick and bent over her chair.

She didn't look up. "Oh, go! I know you want to go. Why don't you go?"

She longed to have him take her in his arms and soothe her and comfort her. She could not control her feelings. She knew that her exactions bored him. But she told herself that all she wanted was just a little sign of real love from him.

He sighed and straightened up.

"Well, fair lady, just as you command. I shall be most sorry to leave you—"

He put on his hat and made his escape. When he was gone, Ward, like a girl in a movie, rose and followed him with arms outstretched to the door. She fell sobbing against the wall.

"You can have your old 'my dear,'" sobbed Ward. "If that's all you care for me. I don't want it." She laughed hysterically at herself, dried her eyes and turned to the mirror opposite the door. "Oh Oz, you

have to care for me. You must. You do. You simply have to love me!"

She went slowly back into the living room and threw herself down on the couch. Her brain went over and over the afternoon. Why had everything gone so wrong? What was the matter with her? What did she want anyway? She had thought she wanted Rod for so long, and now he was coming. Why did she flay herself about Oz? Why did she allow him to make so much difference to her. Why couldn't she be satisfied with his friendship. It was what she wanted, she had said. Did she want Oz's love, now that it was too late? She fell to sobbing. She didn't know what she wanted. She wanted Rod's young, boyish ardent affection. She couldn't bear this coldness, this matter-of-factness, this middle-agedness in Oz. He had no zest for life and for the little things of love that meant so much to her as Rod had. But his personality, his head, his shoulders, the picture of him stamped on her brain was so much nearer and dearer. She couldn't give him up, even for Rod—Rod, the perfect, the ideal. She tried to conjure up a picture of Rod and failed. She couldn't bring an exact image of him into her consciousness. Oz's image was there, which ever way she turned. But surely it was meant that she should marry Rod. Four whole years without a sign and both of them had gone on caring.

Surely there was something fore-ordained, eternal, about a love like that. If Rod would only come so that she could forget this turmoil, this unrest, this constant unhappiness over Oz. To be rid of Oz, to no longer care what he said or did. To regard him with indifference when he seemed cold and far-off from her. She sobbed again at the picture of him as he had sat, smoking and telling her that he would be glad to have

her marry Rod. He was absolutely indifferent, then? Oh no, she could not believe it. Perhaps he, too, was feeling as badly as she. She almost smiled at the picture of Oz, sobbing among pillows. No, it wasn't in Oz to care like that. And that was why she wanted Rod. He would care. He had proved that he could care. Her wants would be his wants. He would love her and cherish her, and their whole romance would be beautiful, imperishable. A romance that she could never have with Oz. Oz would forget things. He was too self-absorbed. Comfort meant more to him than love. Ah, if Rod would only come. And then she would forget Oz, forever. How wonderful it would be never to think of him again. Never to want him again. What rest, what perfect rest! Suddenly she found herself sitting up with clenched hands, her brain whirling with anger and passion. Oz shouldn't escape her. He shouldn't be allowed to pursue his gay, happy, care-free way while she sobbed and wanted him, and was unable to think of anything else. Desperation seemed to be closing in on her. She must do something, do something. Oh, something wonderful and big and arresting that would make Oz come to her like steel to a magnet. So that she would have him always, every thought, every breath.

The telephone rang. It must be Oz, calling to beg forgiveness.

"Hello."

"Hello—Ward?" It was Oz. Her heart leaped. Then she answered coldly.

"Yes."

"I have your purse, and I was afraid you might be worried about it, so I called you up to let you know." Her heart dragged itself down heavily.

"It was kind of you I'm sure."

"It was careless of me to walk off with it in my pocket; I can't imagine what made me do it. I will see that you get it immediately."

"Thank you very much, but I wouldn't dream of troubling you, Oz."

"No trouble at all. I'll mail it to you. You will get it in a few days!"

Oh! She nearly screamed with pain. A few days! She had to see him at once. There were tears in her eyes but her voice was calm as she played up to Oz. "Oh no, don't mail it. I'm superstitious about the mails and I know I'll never get it."

"There isn't the slightest danger of its being lost. I will have it insured."

"I don't care. I won't have it mailed. I'll tell you what you can do. You can take it down to one of the department stores and check it, and then mail me the check."

"Yes, or I might take it down and hock it and send you the pawn ticket."

"Don't be silly!"

"Look here, Ward, I'm not half as silly as you are. If you can't bear the sight of me, I'll drive down and leave it at the desk in the hotel and the clerk can give it to you."

"I didn't say I couldn't bear the sight of you. I only don't want you to trouble yourself."

"Well, you know it's no trouble to me. I'd love to bring it out."

"I'd love to see you."

"Then have dinner with me."

"Do you want me to?"

"Of course."

"All right. I'd love to."

She turned away from the phone joyous. At dinner

she radiated tenderness on Oz; her beauty had never shone more brightly. Oz was very proud to be her companion. There was no other girl quite like Ward.

He kissed her good night when they parted. She clung to him with the happiness of the earth after a spring rain. Nothing was said about Rod, or Ward's engagement to either Rod or Oz.

CHAPTER III

I

THIS was the kind of thing that was always going on between Ward and Oz. It wearied him a trifle, but Ward's happy moments made up for it to some extent. If only she would go on being a butterfly, being happy and beautiful, and not demanding impossible things.

But the spiritual prop of Ward's whole life had been the sentimental idea that the touch of her lover would change the world for her. The legend that her mother had taught her had clogged every issue for her. Early she had sentimentalized love, and called the fiction Rod. And then she had been caught by the glamour of Oz's position, his charm of person; and now passion was gripping her, highly colored like a painful fever through its failure to fit into her early conception of it.

Ward longed for beauty in her life with an intense living force that was with her every moment. Her body, perfect, always well groomed, her home, as beautiful as she could make it, her relations with her friends, all splendid, shining, loving. Everything that she put her hand to was exquisite in detail. She was incapable of turning out a badly done piece of work. Nothing but perfection satisfied her.

Her love affair must be perfection, and the summit of all her achievements. There must be nothing, not one incident of distrust, disbelief, or unhappiness to come between her and her lover. That was why the affair with Oz seemed tarnished, and the affair with

Rod, clean. The temporary stain on the love of Rod had been removed by his four years of constancy. When she saw him, everything would be all right.

And then Rod returned. He came, eager, diffident, encouraged by her letters, which had almost accepted his offers.

And when she looked at him she knew that his love for her was the great reality of his life. He had lived with her image as she had lived with his. The knowledge came to her in his silent figure, in his gaze, it was somehow more a part of him than anything else about him.

Rod's engaging, youthful manner had left him. The grace, the ease that had clung to him, dominating any scene of which he was a part during that summer in Lakeshore had fled, leaving him older, almost middle-aged. He wore his twenty-seven years with a sedate, sobered manner as if they had been ten years more.

He was no longer the gay conquering king of the universe of youth. He was a small town business man, who had to be careful that the place he had won in his little world was not snatched from him. He was away from home, out of his element. He showed it. He entered a room quietly, said little, and was polite and serious over every remark that was addressed to him.

The social manner had dropped from him like a cloak of yesterday. The old gay poise that Ward had so admired, and in remembering loved, had deserted him. He did not even have the fictitious youth that Oz paraded. There was nothing. No charm, no trace, except a resemblance of feature to the old Rod. Here was a new man, a man who loved her with a depth of feeling that she was as conscious of as she was of the big lake always lying at the gateway of the city. It

was there, it was big, it would always be there. It belonged in her life. It seemed as if she had always known that Rod still loved her; that he would come back to her.

And yet she no more loved him now than she had loved him in those first few weeks when he had sought her so ardently, so youthfully, so romantically, that the flavor of it, after he had gone had given her an ideal that had kept her from falling in love again until she had met Oz.

His love was the most real thing in her life. More real than her love for Oz, in spite of her suffering over him. Her love for Oz fluctuated. She loved him. She hated him. She loved him. But Rod's love was always there, unchanging, a mighty eternal fact.

II

And then began an endless succession of days in which Ward tortured Rod, and Oz tortured Ward. She would play out silly little scenes with Oz in which she was a spirit of anguish scantily covered with the robes and mask of joyousness. Social patter gaped now and then to disclose the delicate fabric of suffering—her habitual garment.

But it was in the night that the real terrors of desolation assailed her, crushed her heart like a flower that has been tramped on. It was then that she realized to the full her feeling for Oz, in the sharp fear that knifed her. What if, after all she should lose him. She put the thought away as unbearable, and went back to her love, which was shot through with hate and resentment, and the desire for revenge in all its vile fascination like the face of sin revealed in a flash of lightning. She would throw herself on the bed while

her body seemed to vibrate through it, shaking it, beating up and down with the passionate rhythm of her blood, willing that Oz must suffer, praying to God not to let him escape.

But out of these nights of tears, out of these afternoons of meditating, there was slowly growing a great resolution. Like the core of a boil that must force its way painfully out, leaving a hole in the sensitive flesh, a decision was slowly forming in her inner self that would sooner or later bring Ward to a desperate climax.

III

In a final frenzied effort to forget Oz, Ward attempted to switch her affections to Rod. She had played fast and loose with Rod for three weeks, dismissing him, calling him back, and breaking engagements with him at a moment's notice, for Oz.

Oz was coming to call, and she was dressed and ready to receive him at a quarter of eight. She sat down with a book to wait for him. She couldn't expect him before eight-thirty, she told herself. Still, he might come at eight. In the next room Dizzy pounded her typewriter.

At eight the telephone called her. It was a member of a charity to which she belonged asking her to sell flowers at a bazaar. When she had finished with this conversation Rod called her up, and she talked to him, with an unquiet mind. Oz might come in at any moment now.

Eight-thirty. She fidgeted. Then she called the downstairs office and enquired if a caller had come for her; if anyone had tried to get her on the phone while she was talking. No. Dizzy came in and asked

her if she had seen the dictionary any place, then went back to work. She resolutely began to read, and turned a page, going over every word without being able to sense the meaning. Why didn't he come? Had he forgotten?

"Thought you were expecting a caller tonight. Oz, or somebody?" called Dizzy from the next room.

"He's late."

Nine o'clock. Well, of course, it was ridiculous to be upset so early. Often he didn't finish dinner before nine. She tried to read again. Oh Oz, Oz, why don't you come?

Nine-thirty. He can't be coming. She started to pull off her blouse. Might as well go to bed. Then she threw herself involuntarily on the couch and sobbed and sobbed into the familiar velvet cushions. Never, never would she see him again. This was the end. She pictured herself on a desert island with him. He pleaded with her to forgive him for this. She saw herself turning away, hard and cold with anger. For something dire, dreadful, to happen to him! She hated him. And sat up wondering how any human could be such a fiend. She wondered how he could do it? How could he do it? Her eyes caught the clock. Nine-forty. She fell into another fit of crying, seized her book, determined to read, determined to forget, and choked as her eyes traveled mechanically down the page. Thinking, thinking, torturing herself. She would have this to stand all night. Oh, she couldn't stand it. She couldn't. She jumped to her feet and began crazily putting her blouse back on, rushing to the mirror nervously, jabbing powder on her swelling face. He must come. He must come. He had to come. She couldn't live if he didn't.

At ten-thirty she called up Rod, and asked him to

meet her in the lobby of the hotel. She could not endure another minute.

Rod took her out into the park. They walked for some time in silence. Rod knew she was very unhappy. He suffered with her as much. In a fellowship of pain they tramped through the ash-pale winter park, over to the lake, down the promenade, saying little.

"I've never told you Rod that you were the hero of my dreams for four long years."

Rod spoke huskily. "And then you met some one else. I came just too late."

"No. An infatuation. Nothing real. No semblance of reality. It seems impossible for me to live a quiet peaceful inner existence, Rod. It's very bad for me. But after you left, I felt it much. I was hurt, and lost. I didn't forget. You were always with me, a dream person."

He put his hand on her sleeve. "And you were always with me, Ward. All those years in that stifling town. You can't think how the girls in that town looked to me, after you. There was absolutely no diversion there—even of the ordinary small town sort, because the girls were all so different from you—so inferior. I used to dream about how I would bring you back there and make them all sit up and take notice. Oh Ward, if you could have cared for me how proud—well, perhaps it's just as well. I would be beside myself with joy, I suppose. And then those ghastly summer nights, when the sky hung overhead full of stars, low and close like they were that night on the beach when I kissed you. Do you remember?"

"Rod, I'd give anything, *anything*, if we had married then."

"Oh, I couldn't have asked you to come and share that life. Washing dishes, Ward, I can't see you in the picture. Lord knows, I have nothing to offer you now—just a fairly comfortable home in a small town. But marriage four years ago would have meant squalor. And then there were the girls to consider. They had a right to their schooling."

"Rod, Rod. I'm so unhappy."

"Darling. Oh Ward. Don't." He had her in his arms, his lips on her hair, caressing her in little broken phrases. "My dear girl. Ward, sweetheart. Can't I try? Won't you just give me a chance? You needn't suffer like this, anyway. I know I'm not anything much for you."

"Oh Rod, Rod." There was some comfort in his arms, in his physical presence. She relaxed. Why not? Why not give up Oz definitely and finally? Forget this turmoil and go with Rod. On a wave of decision she lifted her head and met his hungry lips with her own.

He held her fiercely, intensely, as if to concentrate his whole life into that moment. But his passion carried her only a little way. While he was still trembling, holding her close, murmuring, "Ward, my Ward," she was taking command of the situation; surveying it coolly.

"We'll begin where we left off that summer night," she said. "I'm not just the same girl. I'm old, now. Tonight I feel terribly old."

IV

But it didn't work. Inside of three days she had broken off finally, irrevocably with Rod, and sent him back to his little town. Her engagement with Oz was

renewed. He was eager to close the matter, wearied with Ward's exactions.

And then quite by chance she saw him taking tea one afternoon with Miss Fluke. The festering sore had come to a head at last.

CHAPTER IV

I

HE looked up almost as she saw him, rose and came over to where she sat. By an extraordinary chance she was alone. Calling on a friend near-by, she had dropped in afterward for a sandwich.

"I must see you at once," said Ward. "And alone."

Oz sensed the crisis.

"There's a little reception room over here where we can go."

It was a small white room. She seated herself on a straight, high-backed chair. Behind her the slender gray design of shadows was cast by a handful of rushes in a vase upon the white wall, a design that was never seen before and will never be seen again, since it varied with the journey of the light. The sun had fled the room except for a square that struck golden on the carpet to her right, its tinge repeated in the crisp yellow frame of her face. Like a step in the dance which does not pause upon an attitude this moment fitted into her life, but in her memory it remained always immortal, like a picture that has been painted.

Her face was white and set, and sweet with purpose. Her angry passions were all gone. "I'm never going to see you again, Oz."

He began to fume, nervously to set up a re-action to the unexpected dignity she suddenly possessed.

"You're so darn jealous, Ward. What harm is there in a little tea at the Gold Garden. We aren't going

to limit our friendship with the other sex. We've always agreed to that. It's so damned middle-class."

"That has nothing to do with it. It's just come over me. I've just realized it. That you don't love me. That you can't love me."

Suddenly Oz wanted her. He arose and came around a small table that stood between them, and grasped her shoulders. He wanted desperately to get back his old domination.

"You're talking nonsense."

"No!" She evaded his gaze, her eyes fixed on the spot of sunlight on the carpet. "Something has come to me. It's as clear as it can be. I wouldn't mind a little thing like your lunching with another woman if I were sure of you, if I could ever be sure of you. But I can't. That's what has been the matter all along. I knew down in my heart that you could never love me."

Oz experienced a little twinge of desire for honesty. "Love doesn't mean the same thing to us probably, but in my way I love you as much as any man can love you. It's not moonshine and romance with me any more. I'm getting old, I guess."

"Moonshine and romance isn't love, and I'm just finding that out. Love is honesty and dependability, loyalty,—"

Oz shrugged. "My dear girl, why didn't you marry your little country boy. I'm sure he would have given you all that, and more. Look here, Ward, I want you. I want you, damn bad. If I didn't I wouldn't marry you. You've got me, and I'd like to know what more you want. There are plenty of girls I can have. I've never seen the woman yet that I didn't think—well, what do you want more?"

"Love, that's all."

"All right. Say I don't love you for the sake of the argument, I'm willing to marry you anyway. That ought to satisfy you."

"But it doesn't. This is the end."

"No!"

"Yes!"

They panted suddenly with the strain of it. Ward looked at him as he stood over her, then rose, shook herself.

"But why, Ward?" he said with unexpected gentleness.

"It's come to me. Something has clicked down inside of me. Everything is changed."

She looked at him clearly, blue eyes unruffled. It came from somewhere deep down in her and carried conviction to Oz, a sickening conviction.

His eyes became younger than Ward had ever seen them. He wrinkled his brow, contorted his face in suffering. "Look here, Ward, I'll admit I've been rotten at times, but I've always thought a lot of you at bottom. Let's begin over. Let's get married, and live some sort of life, a real life—" He broke off as he saw he was having no effect on Ward.

"It's too late," she whispered.

"What do you mean?"

"I can't. Don't you see? I'm changed."

"You mean you don't care any more? I know. I'll make you care again."

"It isn't that." Her eyes were luminous. For a moment he thought she was going to cry. But she preserved her unnatural calm. "I do care. I love you. I can't expect to make you understand. It's just that I've realized it's a bad job. It's spoiled now. No good. I can't imagine not loving you, but I know.

Don't ask me how, I just know that I can never marry you, that I can't even see you any more."

"But that's nonsense. If you love me there's no reason why we can't be friends even if we can't marry."

It seemed to her that he was already fading, receding under her declaration of love. It registered for future pain. Just then she was high above the current of suffering, conscious of the dizzy depths below to which she must inevitably fall, but buoyed up by the mysterious strength that had come to her and was making her break with Oz.

He took a turn around the small room irritably, then came back and whirled her suddenly into his arms. His eyes looked pleadingly into hers, his arms held her close, he bent his head . . .

Just so, she had felt in Rod's arms. She thought; Why not? Oz was Oz still, dear, lovable, handsome. She yielded her lips gratefully, as one gulps water on a hot day. It was what she wanted, what she needed —Oz.

"It's all right?" said Oz triumphantly, face illumined.

"No!"

"But you do love me?"

"Nothing's changed. I always did. Kissing like that can't change it—"

"Ward, I can't understand you."

"Perhaps I don't understand very well myself. But I know."

"Know what?"

"Know that this is the last."

They kissed passionately again. "I've never wanted you like this, Ward." His voice was unsteady. His body trembled.

"I know. It's just that it's too late." Something of the sweet clarity of her tone infuriated him. It seemed to him to be the good woman's eternal assumption of superior virtue. Her mother must have used that tone often to her father.

"Don't, then. Don't marry me. You think I'm a rotter. Yes, you do. A cad. Let me tell you, young woman, that you can thank your lucky stars that I'm not. Do you think I haven't known that I could do anything that I liked with you? You've given me chance after chance to prove whether I was a cad or not."

"You mean that I've trusted you," said Ward in a voice so low that he could barely hear. She knew that this would be the worst pain of all afterward. Strangely it didn't hurt then.

"Oh, trusted me, yes. But, I mean that you've given me opportunities that ninety-nine men out of a hundred wouldn't have let slip by. And I've been crazy about you, too. That's it. I've cared about you too much. . ." He drifted into a maudlin, sentimental, partially true resume of their relations since their meeting and of his feelings. He was passionately bent on working on Ward's emotions with a highly colored story of his own nobility of soul. He rambled on through three paragraphs that might have been written for him by one of the expert photographers of spurious emotions whose works are so popular with girls like Ward.

II

At the end Ward slipped off the ring and gave it to him. "Goodby," she said. It seemed to her a fitting thing to say. She felt curiously triumphant.

"Call a cab for me, will you?"

"I'll go with you."

"No, oh no!"

"Promise me one thing. Call me up if you change your mind?"

"All right." She would not change.

He stood at the door of the taxicab, smiling a painful smile. Their eyes met for the last time.

She sat upright in the jolting yellow car, wondering how soon it would begin to hurt her. She was still stimulated by the drama of the encounter. The physical comfort of his kiss still lingered like a drink of warm liquor. How long would it be before she would begin to think of the cruel things he had said to her? Now, she saw only his face, distorted, unnatural.

As she turned in at the door of her rooms a wound gashed her as if she had fallen on a sword. It was all over now. She had no Oz. There was no Oz anymore.

She threw herself across the bed in agony. If she could only cry perhaps the bleeding pain would go away for a minute, and let her think of something besides. "Oz is gone, Oz is gone, Oz is gone."

Thank heaven she could be alone. Dizzy would ask no questions. But she couldn't bear to see even Dizzy. The fear got her to her feet, into her wraps and out in the park.

She walked back and forth striving like an animal at bay to ward off the agonized rendings that were threatening. Thinking desperately of practical matters, focusing determinedly on trifles. Exterior objects seemed only shadowy outlines. Reality lay in her thoughts. And she felt the necessity of keeping away from reality.

And so she walked, a drugged person, deliberately

forcing back the sickness that was to engulf her. She tramped on and on, her body cold, hungry, strained, hoping for relief, knowing there was none.

At midnight she crept quietly home, threw herself on the bed, and mercifully, paradoxically, slept.

As dawn broke she arose and undressed quietly. Dizzy was asleep in the bed across the room, breathing peacefully and evenly.

The chill morning air striking her body through her thin crepe de chine night gown made her shiver. With the shiver came a nervous reaction and tears. She crept into bed, cold and sobbing with relief that tears had come. For a few minutes she lay still. Then she began to pray a nervous instinctive prayer, "Dear God give me back my man. Dear God give me back my man."

She heard Dizzy moving in bed. She pretended to sleep. Dizzy rose quietly not to disturb her. Finally, after an interminable interval in which she feigned sleep, she was alone.

As the door shut on Dizzy and she was alone in the apartment she burst into uncontrolled sobs. Only when her body was shaken by paroxysms of grief did she seem to get relief from the terrible weight that was oppressing her. She sat up in bed and rocked herself to and fro. "I think I am going insane," she said to herself quietly, over and over. The rhythm of it soothed her, she listened to her own voice, its quality suddenly musical to her ears. "I think I am going insane, I think I am going insane. I think I am going insane." She lay quiet for a moment, while there was a surcease of the pain that racked her. She turned over in bed and writhed with anguish.

At last, it was unbearable to lie there any longer thinking the same things over and over. She would

have to go out where there were people. There had to be some help for her some place. She jumped out of bed and turned the faucets in the bath tub. But as the water splashed in the tub she knew that she could never stay in the house long enough to bathe. She drew on her stockings with quick, nervous hands. There was just one idea in her mind. To get away from the place where she had spent so much anguish.

III

Slipping on her clothes rapidly, she twisted her hair up and pulled her hat down over her face. She did not powder her nose, she could not wait to get out. But she took a little silver powder case to use once she was free of the house. As the door closed behind her she realized that she had forgotten the key. It did not matter. She wondered whether she would ever come home again or not. She did not care.

She walked on for two blocks. The bright sunlight brought her a little comfort in spite of herself. She wondered what time it was. She thought about four in the afternoon, judging from the time that had elapsed since Dizzy left. She looked in a drug store window at a clock. It was a quarter of eleven.

This revelation shocked her. "Oh, how will I get through the days," she moaned to herself. "How will I get through the days." When she had walked about a mile she began to wonder where she was going. A street car passing caught her eye and she boarded it. It was full of greasy people who sickened her. She got off after a few blocks and wandered forlornly about. She seemed to feel better while she was moving. Sitting still she felt insanity coming near. After another lapse of time when she was sure it must be

getting towards five she discovered that it was only one-thirty. She again boarded a street car and went down town.

She remembered that she had some shopping to do. What was the use of shopping! She knew she would have to get some sort of hold on herself. So she forced herself into buying some little odds and ends she needed. Food! Why, of course. She had had nothing to eat since noon the day before. And she had been hungry at four o'clock when she had seen Oz. She had not eaten her sandwich and had not thought of dinner. Breakfast and lunch-time had passed since then. Perhaps her trouble was more than half physical.

She went into a tea-room and ordered. It was interminable waiting for her food to come. The hours seemed to edge into her presence, grotesque writhing mockeries, dragging their slow way across her vision. All the rest of her life would go by like this with the slow dead beat of a funeral march.

When the food came, she poked it with her fork. It was disgusting. Why had she ordered it? She took a mouthful, and choked. Her stomach rose. She couldn't eat.

She paid her check and left. Two-thirty. What next? A letter should tell her mother the news at once. She couldn't bear to read another long sentimental essay from her mother on the joys of young love.

There was a writing room near the tea room. She tried to think what she would say.

"Dear Mother:

I am no longer engaged—"

She tore the paper.

"Mother dear:

I have broken my engagement to Oz. After all he is not the right man. I saw him yesterday having tea with a very common sort of girl—”

She paused. Was that the real reason she had done it? Because of Miss Fluke? Jealousy? She laughed. A mountain out of a molehill. She ought to have known better. Her heart lightened like a bag of salt passed through a stream of running water. She would go and call him up at once. She could see him, standing bare-headed by the taxi-cab saying, “Call me up if you change your mind, dear.” She saw the wistful boyish look in his eyes, the tight look at the corners of his mouth. A flood of love rushed over her, and she went precipitously for the telephone.

Receiver to her ear, she saw a flash of his face, sneering, repelling, full of scornful sureness of her. She dropped it and it dangled there by the phone while she heard him saying, . . . “don’t you think I didn’t know I could do anything I wanted with you . . . I’ve never seen the woman yet . . .”

She walked slowly away. On the writing table she had left her unfinished letter to her mother, and her purse. She went steadily out of the shop, thinking over the whole scene of the afternoon before, absorbed, on and on, through the crowds.

IV

She was left without defenses. Dizzy had met a very similar situation with two great weapons, a habit of work, and decision of judgment. Ward had neither. She had only the love legend. She had tried honestly to mold her life to this far-flung ideal; agony to the point of insanity was the result. If she had disregarded it instinctively like Sari, or with intel-

lectual deliberation like Dizzy, or, realizing its charlatanism used it as a drape to cover her machinations like Nita, the accepted and successful method, she might have had a chance. As it was she found herself in the position of a man in a shipwreck who lets a raft drift by in order to cling to a hand-carved grandfather's clock. If she had been unbeautiful, like Helene Partridge, she would still be waiting for her man to come, loathing her home, hating her mother, yet unbelievably credulous, turning more and more to the popular novel, the moving picture which provides a vicarious enjoyment, that becomes pathetically less possible of realization year after year.

V.

On Michigan avenue, Ward met a young man that had paid her some attention. She saw in his eyes, which were kind and friendly, that her appearance shocked him. With a sort of enveloping tenderness that many young men possess, he asked her to tea. She accepted gratefully, and fled to the woman's room of a hotel to look at herself in a mirror.

Her skin was white and drawn. It looked dry and anaemic like the rabbit-shaped faces of a type of undernourished girl. Her hair, unbrushed, came from under her hat in pitiful wisps. Her lips were without color.

Rouge! She could put on a quantity of rouge and conceal her grief a little. She asked the maid for some make-up, and washed her face vigorously. Then she discovered that she had no money. Not even a quarter for a tip. The maid was one of those caressing young negro women, who must be descended from old negro mammies. Ward left the room, resembling

the habitues of Peacock alley, and put her mind resolutely on flirting with her escort.

She concentrated on the job in hand, and was able to rid her mind sufficiently of her trouble to eat. The young man, Billy Hammersmith, a well-groomed, well-meaning youngster, was charmed and held. He didn't guess that Ward had pinned her attention on him by wrenching her thoughts into a position and holding them there by sheer nervous energy. If she once stopped flirting, she knew that she would cry.

And in the back of her mind somewhere was the notion playing about with naughty abandon, like a naked six-year-old in a public pool, that Oz might come in, might see her there talking, laughing, enjoying herself.

VI

This idea dominated her in the days that followed. She must go out. She must be seen in restaurants, in clubs where Oz would be likely to go, motoring, walking in the park. She was acting a part every moment, feeling Oz's eyes upon her somewhere in the crowd all about her.

She gathered a string of undesirable males that kept her continually busy. No one was too unattractive for her smiles.

VII

She sat in a second-rate restaurant one night watching a dark, black-browed, purple lipped man with an ochre complexion place his cheek against a girl, and

carefully fit his middle-aged body to hers. He was long and oily and slimp like a snake, and dark and muddy-looking, like the deepest place in a stagnant pool, and withal sleek and well-groomed as he shook his body in the sinuous shimmy, and allowed the sex passion to dominate his face. And the girl, with eyes like a baby waking from a nap, danced daintily and easily as if she loved being in his arms.

Ward looked across the table at her own escort. A toad, talking of ideals that he didn't have. She watched his face as the music howled and amused herself by imitating his expressions so that she would not have to listen to what he was saying.

She had let him order wine for her. She drank until the outlines and images of the places merged into the realities that were her thoughts. It was nebulously amusing.

They got into a taxi and drove about the city. Ward smoked cigarette after cigarette, laughing at the lights along the lake front, repulsing with inward mirth the efforts of the man with her to take her hand, to make love to her. It was so funny that he didn't know he wasn't really there. He was such a toad, and so unimportant, and ridiculous.

And then a thought. The man who had shimmied, the repulsive, livid-lipped dancer with the child in his arms.

"I'm going home."

"Oh, but not yet."

"Take me home—"

At home she slipped out of her clothes and into bed, sobbing, begging heaven to strike her dead, writhing, turning, taunted everywhere by that picture. And the man was Oz, and she was the girl.

VIII

She wrote Anita.

"Oz and I have broken off forever. My heart is just torn to pieces. I am going through a painful re-adjustment. In spite of everything I still long for Oz and want him. I think I would be willing to give up everything for him. I wonder then, why I don't. Perhaps I will. All those things we've talked over and hoped for in married life hold me back. You got them. I am glad. Sometimes I think I am a little insane, I want him so much.

"I wonder why God doesn't send the right man to me and let me marry him in peace. Today I have been thinking that I will never marry. I will make a way for myself with some sort of work and flirt my way through life. Flirting is the only thing I can do well.

"There is a struggle going on in me for ideals. Shall I have ideals or not? They hurt. Life will be so much easier and pleasanter without them, and after all what does it matter? Why do we feel that we must have them? To take away that curious flat taste that nothing matters, I suppose. Oz chose the path of no ideals. I know that now, and that's why we can't marry. What is the real way to live? To let everything roll off of you like water off a duck's back? That is Oz's way.

"I am waiting for Billy Hammersmith to come and take me out. I wish he would come so that I could flirt with him. I must get some work to do, or else flirt and flirt and flirt. There is no deep sort of satisfaction for me in life any place.

"Please tell mother about it. I can't write about it just yet. Don't show her this letter.

"Love,

"WARD."

"P. S. Tear this up."

CHAPTER V

I

Dizzy facing suffering similar to Ward's battered it down with her unfathomable energy. She did not investigate her own feelings hourly as Ward did. She was too contemptuous of the love-sick young girl attitude; her self-confidence was sufficient to carry her through to the time she knew was coming when Jim's glamour would have faded.

She finished her novel, and prepared to go east to assault the long-suffering Hopkins, oracle for all the Dizzys of this generation.

She did not see Jim before she left. Her fortitude was unbelievable to Ward, who still begged her to take Jim back.

"No. Any love of mine would be short-lived, anyway," Dizzy said with a conviction back of her tones that almost amounted to bragging. "By this time I have so completely analyzed my feelings for Jim that I am content without a glimpse of him. He's a beautiful dream and I'm glad it happened. But after all, my work means more to me."

"But Dizzy, I should think he could help you in your work. I mean the experience. I should think it would make your life richer, give you more understanding. If you actually married Jim! After all it's a girl's greatest experience, isn't it? And you could turn your love for him into your work, I should think. Just as you have your suffering—"

"I have not turned my suffering into work," Dizzy snapped. "Oh Heavens, Ward! The sublimated love view of art! I refuse to countenance it—this turned into other channels idea. It's anaemic. Old-maidish! Woman-writerish! I suffer about my work just as strongly, just as abstractly as I do about the man I want. I believe that each moment of the day is separated from the other by the dominating interest of the moment. I am no more love-sick when I think about my novel than when I eat. The weather influences my mood more than the need of a lover. Of course that is because I refuse to symptomize my soul as most young women do, and take stock of pains continually. And because I am not razzled and titillated by the abstract idea of love. And you, Ward, have no business to entertain such thoughts. Love is a mundane business, and to get inspiration from realistic source for art is not like you."

Ward was a little bewildered, a little hurt. She felt that out of her greater experience she could advise Dizzy, but it was evident that Dizzy was merely contemptuous of her experience with men. She saw her off for New York alone, as Sari sent a note at the last moment saying that the Custard Pie players opening prevented her from coming to the station. She concluded her message:

"For thirty traitorous seconds I wanted to go east with you, when I finally realized you were going. It's been my dream for so long. I woke up Cecil and told him, after you telephoned. There was a heavy silence for a moment—then he said, are you going with her? I said—No! Why would I want to go with her? He heaved a sigh of relief and went back to sleep. Next day he begged me in tones that didn't sound convinc-

ing to go with you, and he'd come later with the babies.
Gee, I wish I could see you off!

Love,

SARI."

II

Ward left the Union station a little more blue than usual. Her mood was damp, soppy, disagreeable, with an element of self-disgust that took away the slightly voluptuous feeling of faint enjoyment that she sometimes had in this period of painful brooding over Oz.

A heart-broken Jim called her on the telephone almost as soon as she got back to the apartment. He wanted the solace of her company that evening. She invited him to take her to the opening of the Custard Pie Players, and Sari's debut as Sudermann's "Margot."

Bewilderment was marking a definite line between Jim's brows that was never to leave him. He was unable to understand Dizzy, and had hoped up to this day that a young girl's caprice was keeping them apart. He had bought books on economics, labor, socialism, syndicalism, the Russian Soviet, and tried painfully to get through them. They puzzled him, and shocked him, and upset his standards. Life was no longer simple and easy. The formula—work hard and marry a nice girl and happiness will mathematically result—was not going to work in his case. A dim bitterness colored the constant attempt to think outside the grooves in which he had always thought. In addition to his suffering at the loss of Dizzy, his consciousness throbbed unmercifully with the brain muddle the talks with her had brought on.

His conversation to Ward, disjointed, dressed mea-

gerly in an appearance of impersonality, reflected his hopeless mental tangle.

"Do you think that when a girl and a man disagree about some question that it's serious? I mean do you think it matters in a love affair if people don't happen to hold all the same opinions? Now I believe in being broad-minded—"

Ward gave him a superficial attention and answered his questions mechanically.

III

The lower floor of the Custard Pie Club was filled with people. Jane Austin, a girl with hair cut short and in men's clothes, sat sulkily taking in dollars, her sullen eyes challenging a combat with anyone who cared to take her on. Small nuclei of Custard Pie types clotted here and there, were stared at by the larger groups who had come to be stirred by the unconventional, possibly immoral. A big-busted Jewess, clothed in velvet and furs, kept her small, tortoise-shell-spectacled husband close to her as she watched Janet Millwright and Raleigh Minster seated at a small table, deep in conversation. Janet, garbed in the lavenders and smoke colors she loved, had tucked into her pale hair half a dozen cheap rose colored ostrich plumes, whose color, repeated in her lips, gave her a splendid, bizarre luxurious aspect that all the expensive clothes of the large woman had not been able to bring. Janet was smoking, and Raleigh, in a purple tam, was leaning across the table, looking into her eyes, and now and then taking a puff from her cigarette.

Another outraged spectator of that scene was Mrs. Partridge of Lakeshore. Helene, too, her body half

turned away from them, was watching them obliquely. All her most secret impulses were roused and she feared to be seen watching them; yet in looking away she inflicted a cruelty on herself as painful as the snatching of a hungry baby from its mother's breast. She looked back again and again, until Raleigh and Janet, ardent Freudians always on the lookout for examples of sex inhibitions, noticed her.

"Let's give her a real thrill!"

They leaned closer across the table and kissed, a long kiss, probably only enjoyable for its histrionic value.

As Helene watched, the sex currents were stirred like a muddy pool in a wind storm, while she suffered intensely from shame and disgust. For a part of a moment she admitted to herself that she would like to be Janet. It was not so much an admission as a revelation, glimpsed, dying at the breath of her conscious thought; she was as honestly desirous as Ward of gaining a perfect mate romantically.

IV

"Oh, there's Ward!" Janet smiled and held out her hand, radiating her distinction with the expression and gesture. "Do come here. We're having such an important discussion about matrimony!"

Jim and Ward were drawn to form a circle. Jim had gallantly met Miss Millwright before. Janet ignored him for Ward. Raleigh offered a cigarette.

"You see, we're discussing the value of illusions in matrimony. We've about come to the conclusion that men have to have a set of romantic standards to go on, but that women don't need them."

The discussion was beyond Jim. Ward had a sud-

den flash of thought but it was gone before she knew what it was. The idea interested her.

"You see, women are unconsciously exploiters of sentiment and romanticism," said Janet, reciting the latest bit she had picked up somewhere in her reading or conversation, with a brilliant but false effect of having given the subject some thought. "The average girl realizes that to keep her husband chaste the strongest weapon she has is his own romantic feelings about the splendor of a faithful husband. She plays up to that and invests the role with such an attractive moral color that the average man is perfectly safe in the gaudiest house of prostitution!"

Jim blushed. Raleigh leaned over the table and shook his head admiringly at Janet. "You sure do get things, Janet. I can't help agreeing with you."

"Yes. The American girl is great at exploiting sentimentality and phony romanticism."

The flash come to Ward again. Anita! She sighted a vague form in the background of her mind. Was that the difference between Anita and her? On the surface they were alike, talking about their ideals, believing in them—did Anita believe in them? Somehow these school-girl ideals had served Anita, while Ward had been the slave of them. Was Anita like the girl Janet described?

"I almost get what you mean," Ward said. "But don't you think that sometimes a girl herself is duped by this sentimentality—"

This was a new tack for Janet. She switched the subject.

"You see Raleigh and I find the subject especially piquant because we were just married this afternoon!"

Married! Oh! And exclamations! Ward and Jim both came forward with the conventional greet-

ings. Jim was especially warm. It relieved him to know that this friend of Dizzy's was saved. Janet and Raleigh weariedly accepted congratulations.

"It's really nothing," said Janet. "It was just more convenient for Raleigh to have a wife going around with him on some of his tours than just a girl. Some people objected, you know, and he couldn't get an engagement to speak before the Hammond Woman's Club. So we decided to get married. I distribute pamphlets, you know."

Ward murmured something. Janet patronizingly said that she had to leave as she was going to be on in the third act. She went to the back of the club and disappeared up the stairs.

V

Helene had been watching the encounter, longing to come forward, held back by self-consciousness. But Ward saw her.

"Oh Helene! I'm so glad to see you." They kissed.

"My dear, I heard that you were engaged. Is it true?"

Ward flushed. "Oh, no. Just another rumor, I guess."

"They float around everywhere."

But the comment had jerked Ward back into the land dominated by Oz again. She began to be animated, to laugh, and turn here and there, excitedly acting her usual part to the imaginary Oz somewhere in the crowd.

A group moved toward the door. It was eight-thirty. The curtain upstairs was scheduled to rise at eight-fifteen. The crowd, sheep-like, followed the

leading group at the door and the audience filed upstairs and took their places on the stiff benches.

The orange curtains were drawn back and had developed a hitch. Tex was swearing at them and trying to pull them together. He glared fiercely down at the crowd.

"What're yez all doin' up here now?" he shouted furiously. "Ain't ye got no manners? Where was ye brought up? Git out o' here! Git! Git! Git!" He batoned a hammer over their heads.

A general movement backward started. Tex, hammer in hand, advanced on them threateningly. "I'll teach ye. Comin' up here before you're told! Git the Hell out, I tell you. Git! Git! Git! Yez are all of ye crazy with the heat. Git the Hell!"

They stampeded down the stairs, Tex following them to the head of the well belligerently. Then he went back to the curtains.

Sari, dressed for her part, beckoned Ward into her apartment. "He's simply going nutty. Everything is going wrong," she said giggling. "My dear, it's an absolute scream. Tex got a girl from the west to come and paint the scenes, that girl with the short cut hair that was taking in the tickets. Her name is Jane Austen, and she's the wildest thing! She's even made Janet take notice.

"The first scene is supposed to be the interior of an Irish hut, you know. She's been painting in California and she's supposed to be an expert, the latest thing in little theater settings. So Tex and Pat told her to go on ahead, after she had read the play. Well, my dear, she painted her idea of the interior of an Irish hut, and it was simply one nude woman after another, just as close together as she could squeeze them, on the back

drop. Of course we had to make her paint it out and she's furious."

"But what did the nude women have to do with the Irish hut?"

"That's what nobody knows, but she's absolutely furious with the whole bunch of us about it, and especially with me, because I laughed. To complicate matters Tex is awfully struck with her, and it looks like an affair. And now the curtain won't go together and it's nearly half an hour after time to open, and Pat is in hysterics."

Outside they could hear Tex stamping across the theater and downstairs into the hall where the crowd waited. "Yez can come on up, now," they heard him say.

When the crowd had gathered, the manager of the Custard Pie Club made the opening speech. In a blue denim shirt open at the throat, and soiled from much hard stage carpentering, he stood against the orange curtains to say:

"Yez are all a pack of crazy damn fools! The lot of you! None of ye was brung up right, and it wouldn't ha' done no good if yez had been. You're crazy in the first place or yez wouldn't be here; and so if ye don't like it ye can just git out right now!"

This opening restored his good humor.

"This here's a new art movement and it ain't commercial. It's a swell new art movement, and we got a lot of professionals here that has got Blanche Bates and Sarah Bernhardt backed off the boards. And we got the swellest scene painter ye ever seen, the swellest blind scene painter in the country. She paints scenes for blind people. She come down from California, and she's painted some of the swellest settings ye ever seen!"

He gurgled in his throat, choked and went on.

"Now them crazy damn fools that come up here before they was wanted are a bunch of nuts, and they'd better git to Hell and back before they try any of them tricks on me agin! See? Now listen, if you don't like this here show it's because you've got no artistic sense. The actors have all worked hard and they're a swell bunch. First, they're going to give a fine Irish play by this here bird . . . I forgit his name. Then 'Margot,' by Sudermann, and the last of all a play named 'Cocaine,' by Pendleton King, which has never been given in this city before. In fact none of the plays has been give here by any little the-ay-ter. And this here is the best little the-ay-ter you ever seen, and if you don't think so, it's because you're all a pack of damn fools."

After this propitiatory sibilation he tactfully withdrew into the orange curtains, saying to the actors on the stage in a voice perfectly audible to the audience: "There! That's the way to interdoose a new art movement."

VI

The Irish play, interspersed with many long speeches delivered in oratorical fashion, made every honest soul in the audience either fidgety or sleepy before it even hinted at a climax. A few intense maidens, chins hitched forward, believing themselves to be improving mentally each moment, deluded themselves into a kind of interest. The curtain fell on scattered applause.

Sudermann's play, set in a lawyer's office, was next on the program. At the last moment Sari discovered that a group of pictures that were to represent the

women the lawyer had loved, which had been purchased that afternoon at the ten-cent store, had been carefully arranged by Jane Austen in regular order, one in the center of each panel, to look like decorations on part of the wall paper. Realizing that her lines were spoiled unless they were grouped together, Sari hastily pulled them down from the wall and placed them on a table in a corner.

As her cue came to go on, a hard determined hand gripped her by the shoulder. "You little fool. You little simpering fool, you've gone and spoiled my decorations. You've gone and spoiled my idea. My effect—"

Sari, trembling with excitement, wrenched herself free. She ran towards the entrance to the stage and managed to get on only a second late.

She went through her lines steadily, until she came to her biggest scene when she was to break down and cry. She had just seated herself to open on the climax when a shrill voice at the back of the house distracted the attention of everyone.

"Listen! Just listen! She's a wonderful actress! I'll say she is! That accent. Where she got that English accent kills me! Raised in the Ghetto and got an English accent! Spoiling my whole scene by bunching those pictures! My God! She has no idea of art! She tries to spoil every scene I do. Oh my God, that voice!"

It was the implacable Jane Austen. Someone seized her and carried her out screaming. This brightened up the audience which waited the third play, "Cocaine," with some hope of amusement.

Cocaine was the play that Dizzy and Jim had differed about. It is a conversation in a bedroom between two cocaine addicts, one a prostitute, the other

an ex-prize fighter. Their decision to end their lives is frustrated by the turning off of the gas meter for failure to pay the gas bill. Janet had rehearsed the part tragically; she liked herself as an abandoned woman, futile even in death. She had talked much about the sublime irony of it.

But as she came dragging wearily in her entrance was greeted by the hysterical laughter of the audience. Pat's opening speech, given in a high-pitched cackling voice, brought down the house. Every line drew a gale of merriment. Pat, an old actor, made the most of his lines and played them for their full comedy value. Poor Janet struggled on, growing more tragic every moment. The heavier her tragedy, the more the audience laughed. It was the hit of the evening.

Janet was furious. Raleigh and she made a number of remarks about the badness of Pat's performance, and the cheap tricks he had used to get laughs. But Cocaine played at the Custard Pie Club every night for two months, while other plays came and went.

VII

"That sort of thing may be all right," said Jim on the way home, "but it's not my idea—"

"No, it isn't mine, either!"

"I've been in rotten places, seen my share of bad things, I suppose, but for sheer filth, dirt, rottenness—" he stopped for words. "Well, it's not my idea. In a way I wish Dizzy could have been there so she could have seen—but I'm glad she wasn't. I wouldn't want her to have gone through it. Really, I blush. I don't know. Perhaps I should have taken you home!"

For the first time in her life Ward failed to be thrilled by the thought of being protected like a beau-

tiful flower by a strong man—the American ideal. She wondered why Jim didn't thrill her more and make her regret Dizzy's decision over again. "He is rather stupid, I'm afraid. I wonder why Dizzy liked him in the first place—"

CHAPTER VI

I

WARD still kept the apartment. Leaving town was more than she could bear. Without the stimulation of an imaginary Oz in the crowd about her, she felt that she could not live. If she walked down Michigan avenue, she had the feeling that she might meet him, that he saw her from the window of a club, that he was coming around the corner.

Wherever she dined he sat at the table just behind her, or else would come in the next moment. And she never was rewarded with even a fleeting glimpse of the real Oz. He made no sign. She wrote him three letters but tore them all up before they reached the mail box, and almost called him up more than once.

She had moments of happiness. Dazzling, intense moments, when her unhappiness seemed to lift, as heat will be pulled off the shoulder on a scorching day if one goes into a cool cellar. The heavenly relief of the contrast made her hilarious with joy. She would sing, and dance about her room if she were alone, or bound gayly along the street.

One morning she awoke with the electric current of happiness running through her. She jumped out of bed, singing, bathed like a young robin in spring, taking delight in the feel of the water, her spirits glowing with her blood, as she rubbed herself. Dressing was a game, and when a huge bunch of pink sweet peas from Billy Hammersmith was delivered, she jumped about like a vivacious child before a Christmas tree,

or a moving picture actress registering bliss of an extreme sort.

Out into the bright sunshine of the morning, corsaged by her pink flowers, she strode, a young battleship, weaponed with all the devices of nature and youth. Beauty, health, vigor—she felt them all as she had never been conscious of them before; and as each step snapped on the pavement she was emotionally luxuriating in her happiness, shutting out past and future, wanting nothing, yet knowing that it could not last, like a child at a matinee.

Dearborn street brimmed with morning. Squat ugly houses leering with a whimsical and dusty grandeur of thirty years ago made the parade a thin paper mask of two dimensions. Back of it lay a solidness of joy, happiness, the flash and glitter of sunny days which transuded the scene with rainbow sequins. Boarding houses, bawdy houses, even refuges for Christian young women oozed the silver and gold liquid of her contentment.

She was free of it—free of the pain. And life without the heavy blackness that had held her was very sweet.

The slate-grey outline of buildings, the giant snoring of the Loop, the blackened powder of the streets in her nostrils elated her with the idea of approach. She seemed to soar along—going somewhere—going somewhere. The sea-green river crossed, she pushed her way head-high through clusters of soiled swarthy men, vaguely exotic. Here two men shoved a box of round moon-colored grapefruit—“Some baby!” And here four men stopped bullying a profound-looking horse that resembled Woodrow Wilson to look their fill at Ward crossing South Water street. And Ward, looking up, smiled into the eyes of a frankly imperti-

nent lad who had asked, "Where'dja git the flowers, kid?"

II

? Luncheon time found her across the table from a cunctuous Scotchman.

"I'm happy today and it's so wonderful," she told him.

He looked at her with careful deliberation.

"You're not happy," he said slowly, "don't tell me you're happy. You've got a sad smile."

Tears sprang to Ward's eyes. Suffocating, spider-web bands like twisted black chiffon were binding her once more, chaining her from happiness. What a fictitious, unreal sort of feeling it had been. Under her eyes the skin was lavender velvet.

"Why did you say that to me?"

"You are very unhappy?"

An impulse to luxuriate in confession came. But crowding on it was a pain so intense that she clung to the table—Oz, Oz, Oz. The sympathy in the eyes across the table was unbearable. Why couldn't she have Oz to comfort her in her pain! The emotion reached its apex, the crisis declared itself, her inner forces gave way under the heavy burden, dragged by great clots of sadness. She leaned forward in her chair in such a state of depression that her mind was blank. Lifeless, she lost the capacity for pain in a moment of vacuum, until in sharp recovery she buried her face in her hands and gave way to body-racking sobs.

A second of exquisite physical relief followed each sob. Self-pity overwhelmed her. Sitting still became impossible.

"I must go—you must excuse me." She got up and left the restaurant for the street.

Movement always left relief. In the crowds, running against each other, meaninglessly walking this way and that, she became a particle, running into fat men, bumping girls, pricking and being pricked with elbows, flying aimlessly, swiftly away from something that was always with her, ahead of her. She began to push the air before her with her hands as if her pain was something physical, something outside herself that she could clear away.

On and on she walked, pushing, pushing, pushing.

III

And then one twilight, when the streets had cleared of the day's crowds, Ward saw Oz on Michigan boulevard. He passed her hurrying. Her faculties seemed to suspend.

"Oz!"

He walked swiftly on. The set of his head was the same. His walk—same old walk, jaunty, youthful, debonair, like a forty-year-old actor who plays college boy parts. She loved him so. She almost ran as she followed him, waiting for him to turn around. Surely he knew she was there, surely, surely. It was so plain and so real that they were both there together. He would have to turn around in a moment. She almost overtook him, then fell back. He must turn around. But he hurried on in a fresh spurt and she had to go ahead swiftly not to lose him.

The swinging doors of a men's club. "Oz!" And he was gone.

Her spirit slackened. It couldn't be true. Everything had seemed about to come right, and then—he

was inside the club and she was outside. Always outside.

Her mood came rushing with the force of a panic. She forgot about her engagement for dinner and hurried, hurried, hurried back to the hotel.

He didn't hear, he didn't hear! Didn't he hear? Didn't he see? Didn't he know? How could he help feeling that she was there? She threw herself on the bed and prayed out loud, a sobbing hysterical prayer.

IV

She sobbed until her body grief was spent. And then her spirit searched relief again, a way out, a way out. Some place a door must open; she could not bear the pain. She rose and turned on the light beside her small mirror. Her hair outlined her head in ragged, unnatural patches, like wild underbrush on the edge of some remote river.

Oh the pity of it, the cruelty of the story of the perfect prince. The prince, the prince, the perfect prince, the prince of her fairy tale. Her fairy tale! How pitiful. The cruelty, the agony—Oh!

A little child, she thought, must learn there is no Santa Claus, now she must come to find there was no prince. The gleaming rose-pink story that was to be her life had turned a dull and rusty gray. It mocked her like a grinning fiend. See me, it said, see me! Ha, ha, a prince? A fairy prince who loves his liquors, loves his food, his princely self far more than you! And women, too, perhaps. . . .

The love legend brought her surcease. Oz could not be the hero of that. So hope rose, bedizened, a fabric of cheese cloth to shield her a time from her pain.

V

One night she dined with Mortimer Glosser at the club on Michigan boulevard where Oz lived. Her spirit waited on tip-toe for him to enter. Conscious of her own beauty, sick with fear of encountering Oz's eyes at last, she walked through the soon-to-be crapulent crowds who were celebrating the last gala night of some unimportant festivities that had lasted as long as a Normandy wedding.

Oz, Oz, Oz, somewhere in that throng of dining, laughing people, his eyes had surely found her. She kept her head high and turned neither to the right nor left. If she should see him!

They found their table. Ward pretended to eat while Mortimer engorged himself. Here a housewife, richly hung with garments of a courtesan, was red-faced from much good living. Her attendant, an unfed looking man, monastic in a suit of primeval evening clothes, watched the scene with mordant eyes. And over here blonde girls laughed, and fat men leered. And pallid thin men, liquorless, scattered through the room, were caped in dull and gloomy thoughts as if they meant to spend the night with melancholy: everywhere were stiff men, pompous men, ugly small featured, or repulsively massive men—but no Oz.

Then said Mortimer Glosser: "I hear your friend Oz is to be married."

Like a bucket falling into a well to pull against its chain, her heart plunged, then caught itself.

Brows lifted, nostrils tightened, she wondered if she showed emotion in her face. Suddenly her nerves steadied. She felt certain of control.

"Married?"

"Yeah. Woman he's known for years. Childhood sweetheart or something!"

Ward's eyebrows asked, What do you mean?

"She's a widow. Oz used to be in love with her when she was a girl. She married a man named Marchrose, and they didn't get along. When she divorced him, everyone thought she'd marry Oz, but she married a man with several millions instead. She didn't get along with him either. I guess it was a case of marrying not wisely but too well."

He stopped to let this attempted epigram ink itself permanently on the conversation. Ward managed a smile.

"Well, so this second husband obligingly gets himself jammed up in an automobile accident, toddles off to a hospital and quietly dies, leaving all his money to—Oz."

"Oz?"

"Well, Oz gets it. He leaves it to his widow, and she promptly offers it and self to Oz, who accepts it gratefully!"

"It's rather warm in here isn't it." Ward said the first inane thing she could think of. "Have you been out to the dunes again?"

His favorite subject, the Indiana sand dunes, where he liked to go and spend week ends.

He talked for some time while Ward sat thinking of means to get away.

And then Oz was standing by the table looking down at her. Feeling as if she were inhaling ether she held out her hand, smiled.

"You're looking very charming as usual in that black gown."

She was able to produce an imitation badinage.

"Yes, it's the same old gown."

"As usual! I referred to you, charming you, not the gown."

She lifted her eyes courageously and for a second each saw the essence of the other, the inherent secret existence of both revealed itself until the terrible eternity blurred, ended.

Oz was gone.

Ward, in a daze, went on with her dinner. The final humiliation had come. Oz knew her shameful mental pursuit of him.

He knew. Even the splendor of that last parting was tawdry. There was nothing left.

And he was going to marry a woman of whom she had never heard.

CHAPTER VII

I

LATER, while they were dancing, she saw Jim Howells. When the music stopped he crossed the ball room delightedly, but stopped anxiously before her.

"What's the matter, don't you feel well?"

"I'm a little dizzy. I've caught cold perhaps. . . ."

"Say, you'd better go home. You look ready to drop."

She was conscious of a nebulous wonder about Oz. Had he noticed. . . .? Had he noticed . . . had he noticed . . . what? She couldn't think. This must be insanity . . . or maybe death . . . She couldn't think. . . . Everything had happened to her . . . the last cruel thing had happened . . . Oz knew . . . the prince had ridden away . . . leaving her alone by the roadside, unfit . . . she couldn't suffer anything more, anything worse. . . .

II

A nurse was bending over her, Dr. Smart was standing beside her. She opened her tired eyes wider to take in the white and green room where she lay.

"Am I in a hospital?"

The nurse handed a thermometer to the doctor.

"Well, my girl, since you ask me, you are in a hospital," said Dr. Smart. She closed her eyes.

"What's the matter with me?" she asked after about

three days of rest, surprised to see that the doctor and nurse were still standing there.

"You've been sick," said the doctor smiling. "Now, Ward, be a good girl and don't ask questions until you're feeling better. You're going to be all right."

She closed her eyes thankfully. How wonderful Doctor Smart was. Really some one ought to tell him what a good doctor—what a comfort—she hadn't much voice, but that at least was due him after all he had done for her.

"Dr. Smart," she said weakly, "you're a good doctor!"

Again she sank to rest. This time she slept for five days, she thought, and woke to find the doctor and nurse still there. Dr. Smart was a good doctor. Some one ought to tell him.

"Dr. Smart, you're a good doctor!"

There. That was done. Now she could rest. Dr. Smart would take care of her. You could depend on him. If only—if only God were like Dr. Smart.

III

As soon as her temperature was normal Sari came to see her.

"Jim Howells brought you home, raving. You talked and talked about black chiffon bands that were binding you. I called Dr. Smart and he took you to a hospital at once."

"Did I make a complete fool of myself at the club?"

"I don't think so. Ward, you couldn't make a fool of yourself. You remind me of Cecil's cousin Roger who boasts that he's a gentleman even when he's drunk. He told me that even under the influence of

liquor he simply couldn't do an indelicate thing . . . well . . . you'd have to see him to be really amused at that. But I don't believe anyone noticed anything. You know Jim and his tact. He even got Mortimer Glosser, that old fish, to thinking you were all right."

"Jim is a dear." Her eyes filled with weak tears. Cloud-like thoughts of herself and Jim, of Oz and Dizzy were faintly sad like music heard over hills caped in twilight. It was all over about Oz. In her white bed, she felt safe from all those racking, torturing past weeks.

She went to sleep smiling.

IV

She found a room in a hotel very near to Sari and Cecil and took her meals with them. She spent long hours with the babies in the park. And she walked and walked by herself, thinking, thinking.

Tramping through the park in the crisp fall afternoons she thought over her whole life, and tried to think why she alone of the four girls had failed to find happiness. . . . Were the other girls happy? She wondered. Did Dizzy unbearably want Jim? No, or she would have taken him. Still, she had had a chance to take Oz. What then? An ideal. They had both clung to ideals. The love legend, after all, had meant more to her than any individual. Yes, that was so, and avoiding the hero of the legend had meant more to Dizzy than Jim. Her re-action against it had carried her too far. She should have married Jim. . . .

But her mind was drifting off the subject. She must come back to herself . . . ideals . . . illusions. That

was what had been wrong with her. Too many sentimental illusions. . . .

Coming in from her walk she said something like this to Sari.

"No, I can't believe you've lost your illusions, Ward," Sari answered. "You couldn't. You wouldn't be you, without ideals."

"People are cluttered with illusions that in order to become successful and happy they have to lose," said Ward. "Once lost they are free to think clearly and fight their way to the top."

"Perhaps," Sari had agreed. "But once they get to the top they build a new set of illusions if they are the sort that had them in the first place. I don't believe I ever had any."

"I don't think you did, either. Neither did Dizzy. Just Anita and I. We always talked about our ideals, and aspirations, and we were always so sure that if you did as you were told you would ultimately find your prince and live happily ever afterward."

"Nita never really believed that. She only pretended to. You notice that any sentimental notion or conscientious scruple never kept Nita from doing exactly as she pleased. And don't you remember how popular she always was with the sort of girl that needed an ideal to worship. And how contemptuous she really was of them, and yet how she led them on and fed their admiration for her. She used sentimentality. Held herself above it, and dished it out the way Dizzy says the capitalists do to the working classes to hold them in subjection. Propaganda and publicity are Nita's specialties."

"Of course, in a way, Nita's been the most successful of any of us."

"Oh well, if you call that success. I don't. She's simply achieved a place where she's well-fed, well taken care of, and doesn't have to do too much work. A lot of idiots probably look up to her. They always did and they always will. She works hard enough to get their admiration and she ought to have it. However, I consider that all the rest of us amount to much more than Nita. You, Ward, of course, have always been the dupe of guff. Dizzy deliberately and intellectually was never deceived by any of the things mother taught us. And I just knew, without thinking, that it was all bunk. I used to watch you making boys fall for you. I realize now that you did it unconsciously, but I used to imagine that you had mysterious wiles, and imitate some of your tricks. I had no belief that men would fall for me unless I made them. And it used to make me peeved that I couldn't make them. But I never had any notion that it was because my real prince would come along and make life a bunch of roses. I never even thought of Cecil in that way. He was just something new. The babies were never little flowers given me as a sacred gift from on high. They were just little nuisances to be borne with as best one could, and take care of because they were helpless and it was unfair not to. And I got to love them, and I got to love Cecil. I didn't love him when I married him because I was incapable of it. But we went through so many experiences together that now I couldn't do without Cecil. He means more to me than fun or work, or any of the things that used to occupy my thoughts."

It wasn't often that Sari stopped in her headlong flight through life to state her views as fully as this. Ward had been very receptive. It all jibed in with her formulating philosophy.

V

But Sari herself was still cherishing the illusion that she was going to become a star on Broadway. Jim Stein of the Times, whom she had met through Dizzy, had written a play in which she was to act at the Custard Pie Club. Jim had said she was just the type to portray his character—a little ribbon clerk who decides that she'd rather be a prostitute. Cecil's aunt's husband, who was the Chicago representative of some well known New York producers, had agreed to come and see Sari act. If it went well, Jim was going to do it into a three-act play and Sari was going to star in it.

On opening night the Custard Pie little theater progressed through two acts in its usual manner. And then out came Sari, and went through her lines for some moments very well. Then a hoarse raucous noise distracted the audience, and three clown faces appeared at the window. Three drunken men had procured step ladders and had climbed up to see the show without paying admission. The audience went into gales of merriment. The three men went through the usual asinine performance so amusing to any mob. Sari struggled on through her tragic lines while Tex Flynn, ever awake to opportunities for publicity, could be heard through the uproar saying to the ever present reporters: "Come right in, boys, and I'll give you the story. It's the best story you ever seen."

Sari went doggedly through the scene, while the ironic Jim Stein lines brought tears of joy to the audience as they were answered by the three garish faces staring barbaresquely, bodilessly in. When she

had finished, she walked across the theater heavily—and into her rooms.

Once more, she had lost out. Cecil's uncle would be terribly disgusted. She had not waited for his verdict.

VI

Ward decided to go to her mother in California. There was nothing to keep her in Chicago any more.

CHAPTER VIII

I

WARD sat looking out of the window of the moving train. Motion, changing landscape, the pleasant glare of the late afternoon sunlight exhilarated her. She had the sense of holding all of life's wisdom in her lap.

Soothed by the sense of going forward, she planned her life. At last, she thought, I am going ahead on clear, definite lines.

Across the aisle Tin-tin sat in Olive's lap playing with a chain of red and green beads that the old woman wore around her neck. Cecil Jr. slept gracefully opposite them. Ward smiled into Olive's eyes—the woman of her mother's generation, yet so unlike her mother—as different as she was from Dizzy—or Sari from Nita. Yet people were continually talking about the modern girl—as if she could be made into a composite photograph.

The decision to bring the babies along had been sudden—as sudden as the unexpected success of Cecil and Sari.

The disastrous premiers of Jim Stein's play had had a surprising back-fillip. Cecil's aunt's husband had called up the next day, radiant with enthusiasm. He was anxious to put the thing on the Orpheum circuit, as he considered it one of the funniest things he had ever seen. He wanted some sort of drunken interruption to add the touch that had been given it on the

opening night and remembering Cecil's talent for playing any instrument known to the world of jazz, he had suggested that Cecil come on, dressed as a tramp and drowning out Sari, first with the saxophone and then with the ukulele. With this change, the act had been rehearsed before him, booked at three hundred a week, and the young De Jonghes were to all appearances on the road to prosperity. They were to start on tour almost immediately, and so the babies were to go to their grandmother with Ward.

Among the applicants who had answered Ward's advertisement for a nurse to go to California had been Olive. The matrimonial picking was hard in Chicago, and Olive had heard that conditions were much better in California. When she looked in the old woman's eager eyes, Ward did not have the heart to choose a more competent applicant. Olive was, after all, trustworthy and devoted.

II

A puff of white smoke from the engine blotted out the landscape, a white, solid, beautiful thing, until it dissolved.

Most things are like that smoke screen, said Ward to herself softly. One went through smoke screens all the time. Just ahead there was always one that seemed impassable. One had to be as sure of oneself as the engine of the car was—a sureness so certain that it was unconscious, then one plodded steadily through and saw that troubles, joys, everything, was only a sort of smoke screen. Oneself, that was the reality, the rest should be recognized as unimportant.

III

Looking through the train window she grimly resolved that no person should ever again affect her destiny as Rod had done, as Oz had done. No one. There was a kind of exultation in the thought. She would love again, yes, but never with that agony of self-abandonment, that painful submergence of her personality in another. Never would she sob herself to sleep, or wait tense with misery beside a telephone that didn't ring. That sort of love was criminal—destructive—debasing.

Her mother had loved that way—first her husband and then her children. She would probably fasten the same tentacles of affectionate tyranny on her grandchildren. Poor little babies—warm thoughts of them coursed through her.

She would have children. The thought of spinsterhood would not do. She must have them if only to prove that it was not necessary to love them too much. She smiled as she thought of Dizzy's theory that no woman wanted children except to experiment on, to move about like little puppets that were too weak to revolt against her will. But she would not let them rule her either. She would love them and still keep peace with herself.

Out the window dusk was falling. The transparent blue and velvety sky had a single gold star gleaming through as if a golden story was hid from the world except for that tiny rent, where it shone through the blue stuff of the twilight.

Here Ward saw beauty. And felt herself somehow in it. The thing meant to her in some strange way, the happiness that was in her heart, and the odd

vibrant pain that was there at the bottom of it all. That was it, that was beauty, that was the meaning of pain. Beauty rides on pain, a gallant mistress. And in the subduing and conquering of pain is beauty.

V

Her life was to be like a swim at twilight through a sea like that gold-split blue sky. She could feel the soft caressing water on her body, taste the fresh evening air, as she thought of the blue curtains of sky and water shading from the brightness beyond.

Life was like swimming. And with her three sisters she had plunged in instead of waiting on the beach as the other Lakeshore girls had done.

Sari had tumbled in, anxious to be there no matter what might befall her. She had met storm and eddies, undertows without fear, was still swimming on bravely, calmly. Nita had waited for her opportunity and then dived, a clear straight leap, and had been going evenly and surely ever since. In babyhood, Dizzy had waded in, walking until the water covered her chin and then had learned to swim. She, Ward, had alone encountered dangerous whirlpools, and that was because she had thought a sandbar lay just beneath where she could be in the midst of everything, and still not struggle. There was no sand bar, but there were smooth, clear stretches where the expert swimmer using all his faculties could proceed with the minimum of difficulties, and enjoy as he went. If he saw a storm ahead, by clear swimming and even breathing and not losing his head he could come through it all right. And there were moments of sunset and rainbows that lent color to the swim. What was on the other shore did not interest her. She had conquered the great force